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# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE CHRISTIAN SOUL

THE CUNNINGHAM LECTURES FOR 1911

# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE CHRISTIAN SOUL

BY

GEORGE STEVEN, M.A.

EDINBURGH

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# PREFACE

When the theory of Development in Nature first compelled attention, the cry of many Christian men was, 'You are driving God out of His universe.' But as the years passed by they perceived that the theory had brought Him into the very heart of Nature. The process itself was seen to be divine.

To a Christian man studying to-day the nature of the Spiritual life it is open to ask how far this idea of Process extends, because he believes that without God there is no spiritual process at all. Spiritual Process is God working in the minds of men. That is the ruling conception in this book. The writer believes that the spirit of man is in some way supernatural, and that Christianity is an Educative process by which that spirit may be so trained as to hate and fear sin, or when it has yielded to sin, may be delivered and purified. The educative and redemptive power he believes to be the Personality of Jesus Christ, the Lord of men. To search into all this patiently and humbly is true reverence.



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The story of one man's search—all imperfect as he knows it to be—is here set out in the language of students of the human mind. The writer knows of only one claim he has to be heard. Through many years it has been both his duty and his privilege to study, not books only, but the original sources at first-hand: he has been forced to bring his own theories and those of books to that final test—the lives of men and women. It is, of course, a very old study, but also very new.

The writer is under obligation to so many books and friends that he cannot attempt to enumerate them. But it is a very great pleasure to him to express his profound gratitude for many most valuable suggestions to the Rev. Professor Martin, D.D., who read the MS.; to the Rev. David Eaton, D.D., and the Rev. T. L. Ritchie, who read the proofs; and to the Rev. William Johnstone, M.A., who prepared the Index. Nor is it possible to forget the Office-bearers and Members of St. Bernard's United Free Church, whose kindness, seeming only to increase with the years, has made the production of the book possible.

EDINBURGH, *October* 1911.

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# CHAPTER I

## THE RELIGION OF CHRIST, AN EDUCATIVE PROCESS

SOME forty years ago Lord Morley in his work on Compromise was led to speak of the attacks that had been made on the religious position by unbelief, and of the change in the temper of unbelievers. Now, he says, the modern attack, while fully as serious and much more radical, has a certain gravity, decorum, and worthiness of form; no one of any sense or knowledge now thinks the Christian religion had its origin in deliberate imposture. He goes on to say (and it is for this we quote him): 'The modern freethinker does not attack it; he explains it. And what is more, he explains it by referring its growth to the better and not to the worse part of human nature. He traces it to men's cravings for a higher morality. He finds its source in their aspirations after nobler expression of that feeling for the incommensurable things, which is in truth under

so many varieties of inwoven pattern the common universal web of religious faith.' [1] In other words, the modern attack on religion will be by means of the psychology of the religious soul. But forty years bring in their revenges, and it is now more apparent than it was that the better part of human nature, men's cravings for a higher morality, their aspirations, their feeling for incommensurable things have themselves to be explained, and that the psychology of religion is only the explaining of the way in which the deeper things of life work within the human mind. Moreover, so little do men believe that the explaining of religion after this fashion is an attack upon it, that religious men above all others are busy at the work. Before the explanation is adequately built up many a long day will pass, and many an earnest worker will have given his life to it, for it can be built up only as other sciences have been, stone upon stone, experience after experience, and through the deep searching of truth-loving men into the hearts and lives of thousands of Christians and into the sweep of Christian movements.

Religion deserves it. Through all the ages and over all the world religions have ap-

[1] *Compromise*, p. 150 f.

peared, and are still appearing. They have assumed the most amazing forms, leading men to undertake the hardest of duties or undergo the most terrible of sufferings. Religion has made nations, and then torn them asunder. It has proved itself the friend of truth, and next persecuted those who had discovered truth; it has fought bitterly for obsolete ideas and works that were dead, and in a few years has become the leader of the forces of liberty, and the champion of reformations and social revolutions. To take our own religion as an instance, Christianity has never long ceased to have a vision of a new social order, for was not its Founder, that greatest of all Dreamers and Workers in the world's history, the Friend of the poor and the outcast? Followers of His, like St. Francis of Assisi, have themselves become beggars that they might make beggars rich in spirit; or have sacrificed their lives to minister to men hopelessly diseased; or have laboured through years to emancipate slaves, or befriend costermongers and chimney-sweeps and child-toilers; or in multitudes, unnamed, unpraised, and working without a thought of reward, have become the hidden leaven of society that the whole of society might be saved.

These are works that are patent to the sight of all men, and done perhaps by elect spirits; but Christianity is no less potent in the lives of common people. When it comes to them in its power it gives them a love of personal uprightness, of purity, and all worthy living; it enables them in a new way to help their fellows; it delivers them, as it were in an instant, from the thraldom of some vice, changing greed into generosity, violent temper into gentleness, pride into lowliness of mind, contempt of those he counts his inferiors into love of them, and a debased imagination into strenuous effort to protect the innocent. Still further, this passion for what is pure and noble and lovely in life, this hatred of evil, which comes through the Christian faith, has swept from time to time over a whole country, carrying men and women before it into a new existence, and saving a whole nation, as Wesley did England, from violent revolution.

It was a happy thought that the best way of dealing with such a religion as this was to explain it. We ask for nothing more; and we are confident that any contribution towards an explanation, be it from without or from within, weighty or but slight, will be welcomed by every one whose faith is

established in Him who above all things is the Truth.

An Educative Process.

The purpose of these lectures will be to deal with the religion of Jesus Christ as an educative process. Now, the very words 'educative process' will seem to many a narrowing of the purpose and power of this divine manifestation, for to them education is little else than the conveying of knowledge, or the restraining of the untutored impulses of the young. And yet, when rightly conceived, it is neither the mere giving of information nor the training of faculties nor the restraining of impulses, but the leading of man into the fellowship of the Mighty Father, the revealing of the universe as altogether just and good, the developing within him of the sense that he is but one of a great brotherhood, and that his highest glory is to consecrate himself to their service in God. We are going to limit our consideration of it to the point of view of man and the movement of it in his own mind; but if we were for a moment to look at it from the point of view of God, it would be seen to be an eternal process by which He seeks the friendship of men, training them, as a father might his son, to enter into all His plans and interests, and into all His delights. God does not conceive

of us as rebels, though we do rebel, nor as His servants, although it is our honour to obey, but as friends, as sons whom He woos and wins, that He may open up to us all His thoughts and purposes. This soul of ours is to be trained up into the knowledge of the highest; the information we receive, the ideas given us from the spiritual inheritance of the race, are to form a personality; and the restraint we need will come according to the method of Christ from the encouragement and fostering in the heart of the divine life He has Himself bestowed upon us in our very constitution. It is true that development of a plant can be nothing but the more or less perfect evolving of that which was in it from the beginning, that and nothing more. But it is not so with the development of the human soul. It is an opening up truly of what is within, but by means only of what is communicated to it in thought and example and the deep irresistible influences of the community into which it is born. 'Does a human being bring with him into the world his future shape or does he not?' asks Herbart. The plant will not miss its end, nor will the bird newly hatched fail to fly. But without the most careful training the child will fail, and fail tragically. And that

training in its perfection has come to us in the Christian religion. What could be finer for the young than a Christian home encompassed by a Christian community? The manifold discipline of life is fitted admirably to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit; and when the path is lost, the deeper discipline of the 'far country' will bring the erring home, we all hope. This is the meaning of our life here, and the long path we are purposing now to study.

## THE NATURE OF THE SELF

WHAT then is the soul, or self, or spirit? It is that which is the foundation of Personality, that on which every Personality is built up, or out of which every Personality is developed. It lies deeper than thought or feeling or will; it is that which thinks and feels and wills. Every child born into the world brings with it the beginnings of this soul.

> 'So rounds he to a separate mind,
> From whence clear memory may begin,
> As through the frame that binds him in
> His isolation grows defined.'

He will be himself, we say, and not another, will one day say 'I am,' and in saying it

be separated for ever from the world, ay, separate even from God until the day when he surrenders himself to the will of his Heavenly Father. Père Gratry, in a striking passage, tells how, at the age of five, he came to realise this.

Père Gratry.

'I remember in my first infancy, before the age of reason (as it is called), having felt this impression of Being in all its vividness. A great effort against an external mass, distinct from me, whose immovableness amazed me, made me utter the words "I am!" The thought came to me for the first time. The surprise arose soon to the most profound astonishment and to the keenest wonder. With transport I repeated "I am!" "Being!" "To Be!" The whole religious depth of my soul, poetic and intelligent, was in a moment awakened, stirred within me. A penetrating light, which I believe I still see, enveloped me; I saw that there was Being, that Being was beautiful, blessed, gracious, full of mystery. After forty years I still see all these internal facts and the physical details that surrounded me.'[1]

That is how one child started on a great career. But every child in its own simple way makes its start; and out of the same fundamental self he, and not another for him, will achieve a personality, good or evil, great

[1] *Souvenirs de ma Jeunesse*, by Père Gratry, p. 2 f.

(it may be) or mean. He will judge the world, try his strength against some resisting mass, will lift himself out of himself (such is the amazing prerogative of every human being), stand for a time deliberating, and then betake him to his own upward or downward course. It is indeed a stupendous enterprise to lead the helpless and ignorant to enter into the full possession and mastery of such a self, but it has been done and done successfully, and done ten thousand times. The greatest personalities in history began where the weakest begins, perhaps with no better opportunities and certainly with no other material than lies open to all. To all come the ordinary events of the day, of home and school and the street. The main difference between the best and the worst is in the choice, by another hand than their own, of the circumstances which should play upon them in youth, of those to which the attention should be directed, and out of which should spring thoughts and feelings and acts of choice and efforts that make the man. Now that choice by another hand is Education.

But this self even at its source does not seem to be entirely simple, a mere centre round which the personality grows. There

(i.) The Inner Light.

is in it something akin to what is universal, divine. Men describe it as conscience, or reason, or the witness of God, or the inner light, or the divine spark. It is that germ in man which develops into the spiritual beauty of a religious personality. It is no mere natural acquisition like a language or a custom; it is not taught us consciously by others, although others develop and train it; it is not bestowed on us as an imparted gift at some crisis of experience, although in a crisis we may come to the full knowledge and possession of it; it is ours from the beginning. It is in the deepest sense ourselves, though the light be dim and the germ unsprung. Wherever men meet, young or old, learned or ignorant, they are found to be busy judging themselves or their neighbours by a standard of right and wrong; not merely things around them or above them, but persons—their words, their motives, their desires, and ends.[1] Children are as busy at it as grown men. Away from this necessity of forming moral opinions we cannot escape, upon it depends the development of our whole spiritual nature. Foolish and false as many

[1] Compare a fine passage in Dean Church's *Cathedral and University Sermons*, p. 30 ff.; and another in Principal Rainy's *Philippians*, p. 340 ff.

of these judgments are bound to be, we dare not cease to go on judging. True, we judge at our peril, for every judgment is in some sort taking a side, and taking a side in moral matters is practically adding to our bias in character, and to that extent determining what our personality shall be. Nevertheless, judge we must. We must approve and disapprove; attach values to men and their motives; discern the ends they seek, and accept or reject them; we must admire and honour and love according to our valuation of them, for such is our life. By this same light, too, we judge ourselves, search out our most secret thoughts and desires, and bring them to this inner judgment-bar. We approve or disapprove of ourselves—that is the divine nature in the heart of man. It may be neglected, forgotten, lie dead; men may deny they have it, mock at it as a mere survival of an outworn creed, but, as Carlyle says, 'There is an Infinite in man which with all his cunning he cannot quite bury under the Finite'; and, as we shall see, this Infinite, seemingly dead and buried, can yet rise into the most potent and revolutionary activity. Without its presence personality of any kind would be impossible; indeed it is the very core of the character. It is the power by which

we are emancipated from the control of the instincts, and which directs the individuality to a worthy end. It opens up the deepest and broadest conception of the universe; it gives the end for which men live; lifts the strong and the weak into another world, enabling them to put under their feet every selfish impulse, taking every thought and every imagination of the heart captive; changing instinct, it may be, into a passion for righteousness, and turning genius and energy alike into the service of their fellow-men.

(ii.) The Instincts.

But there is something else, seemingly opposed to the spirit, viz. the instincts. Our instincts come to us with a history behind them of long ages, and would appear to be entirely based on our animal nature, but deeper investigation shows, as Professor M'Dougall puts it, that the instinctive reactions become capable of being initiated not only by the perception of objects of the kind which directly excite the innate disposition, the natural or native excitants of the instinct, but also by ideas of such objects, and by perception and by ideas of objects of other kinds. We all speak of the vast importance of forming right habits, but few habits can equal in motive power the principal instincts.

'Habits are in a sense derived from and secondary

to instincts; for, in the absence of instincts, no thought and no action could ever be achieved or repeated, and so no habits of thought or action could be formed. Habits are formed only in the service of the instincts. . . . We may say then that directly or indirectly the instincts are the prime movers of all human activity. By the conative or impulsive force of some instinct (or of some habit derived from an instinct) every train of thought, however cold and passionless it may seem, is borne along towards its end, and every bodily activity is initiated and sustained. The instinctive impulses determine the ends of all activities and supply the driving power by which all mental activities are sustained; and all the complex intellectual apparatus of the most highly developed mind is but a means towards these ends; is but the instrument by which these impulses seek their satisfactions, while pleasure and pain do but serve to guide them in their choice of the means.' [1]

In common speech we indicate these instincts by naming the emotions that accompany them—fear, disgust, wonder, anger, subjection, elation, affection, and so on. Now, the very naming of them in connection with the thought of religion suggests the danger that arises to the character from their presence in us. Yet, as we see, they are indis-

[1] *An Introduction to Social Psychology*, by Professor William M'Dougall, p. 43 f.

pensable in the formation of character and cannot be eradicated without permanently injuring it. Nevertheless, they may and do destroy many men through their attaining mastery over the higher nature. Through attention, this instinct or that may be developed until it subdues every impulse to good, and, laying hold of the other powers of the soul, uses them for its own degradation. So masterful may this part of our nature become, and so destructive, that to many minds moral education and religion have meant little more than a means of restraining the instincts. Men dwell on the havoc they work; souls that might have served the highest ends are debased until they can neither speak nor think of anything but their own iniquity. Still these instincts are not to be thought of as an enemy within the gates working ruin, but as powers that can be so trained and so idealised that they become the finest aids to the making of a Christian.

(iii.) The Individuality or 'Genius.'

There is a third character of the soul which we shall call individuality. The individuality of the soul is that quality which is a man's own original, personal, and peculiar characteristic. It would appear to occur once in history and not again, is not due to inheritance, owes little to environment, nothing at all to

experience. Experience and environment are only the occasions of its manifestations. Taine [1] argued that experience and environment were everything, and that if only we could have interrogated by skilful questions the great writers in literature, we could have reached the mechanism of their genius. English literature, according to him, is the product of the English race, living under our grey skies, and passing through our historic experiences, and adopting, what seemed to him, our strange religious beliefs. But this theory (whatever truth it may contain) takes no account of what Professor Wallace calls 'The insoluble residue in the background, from the depths of which continually rises the unexpected and undesirable.' [2] This residue we may call genius, or talent, or temperament, or idiosyncrasy, or only disposition; but it is radical. It is that which distinguishes not only poets but day labourers sharply from one another. It is the attitude which the soul takes to the world, manifesting itself now as æsthetic or inquisitive or practical, and again as buoyant or timid, or giving us the born optimist or the born pessimist.

[1] *Vide* Taine's *English Literature.*

[2] *Lectures and Essays*, by Professor William Wallace, contains an interesting essay on Personality.

It is not character but rather the direction in which character will find expression; it is the point of view from which a man looks out on life. This is his own peculiar gift which he must exercise in life, his birthright for which he can justly claim education and scope, and which every wise nation will both educate and appreciate. By his very constitution, therefore, every man has his vocation, be it high or low; and if he truly fills it he will be helping his fellow-men to a goal which, we may believe, is in the mind of God.

How these three affect Religion.

Let me put these three characteristics shortly. The fundamental nature of the soul seems to involve a spiritual end, a personal talent by which the end may be reached, and an irresistible impulse to be up and doing. In other words, we have in our very constitution as men—in conscience, individuality, and instinct—a predestined goal, a predestined path by which we can best reach the goal, and energy to carry us through. None of the three can be safely ignored, or mutilated, or suppressed. The instincts so often reprobated are as indispensable as the 'genius' itself; without them there would be no vitality in religion, and no emotion to give religion love or joy. In the same way, the individuality is easily ignored, and yet

is profoundly influential on the spiritual life. Just because it determines the line of life in which a man is called to serve his fellows, to resist or condemn in the interest of religion what is clearly a man's vocation, is to endanger religion itself. There is nothing more likely to impoverish our faith than narrowness of outlook here, nothing more certain to aid and strengthen and purify the devout life than widening the circle of our interests. The opening up of the great realities of life —freedom, knowledge, beauty—makes men readier for God. For example, art, which to many men seems so little akin to religion, may be made its handmaid. The purpose of Beato Angelico was really to glorify his Master and Saviour, and to strengthen the faith of his companions. 'Whoever does the things of Christ,' he was in the habit of saying, 'must always cling to Christ.' It has been told of him that he never painted a crucifix but his cheeks were bathed in tears. That was the case with a great worker; but the same is true of every Christian according to his measure. A living French artist, speaking at the annual celebration of a great charitable institution in Paris, said:—

'I know an artist who some thirty years ago, after a violent spiritual struggle, declared himself ready

to renounce his career and to seek a place among the workers of La Force if God showed him clearly that such was His will. He came out of that struggle of soul confirmed in his vocation as a painter. What does that mean if not that Art has its part to play in the execution of the divine plan, which is the restoration in a corrupt world of eternal beauty ? '[1]

Now, the development of this unique and original side of the personality must in some degree determine the attitude of a man to religion. Men so differently endowed will come to God by different paths. One is attracted by the moral beauty of Christ, another by the opportunity of serving his fellow-men, another by the insight the Christian religion gives into truth, and still another by the love of peace and a life of devotion. They may indeed have one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father, and yet live religious lives as diverse as the tongues in which they pray.

These innate and possibly insurmountable differences will perhaps render one man inaccessible to certain aspects of truth which find ready entrance into the minds of others —inaccessible to the appeal of certain persons whom others hail as prophets. We all have

[1] Eugène Burnand in *Foi et Vie*, 1st July 1910.

our natural sympathies and antipathies even in the way of stating truths which we believe; are biassed by mental constitution towards a mystical or a forensic view of Salvation, to a speculative, or a critical, or a practical handling of the doctrines of Christ. To one type of teacher we are highly suggestible, to another as highly contrariant. Hence controversy. This view of controversy may leave us wondering at the strong language controversialists apply to one another; but it leaves us with the conviction also that a man is not necessarily beyond the reach of Christ because he is beyond the reach of some ways of presenting Christ, and with the hope that a teacher may arise sometime, somewhere, who will win the allegiance of the most rebellious.

## THE BUILDING UP OF A PERSONALITY

OUT of this soul so constituted is to be developed a Christian Personality,[1] and to be developed (as we are contending) by Education. But it is a stupendous under-

[1] In recent years the subject of Personality has been much discussed. An admirable treatment of it, and one of the earliest in our language, will be found in Principal Iverach's *Is God Knowable?* (1884). *Vide* also Illingworth's *Personality Human and Divine*; Professor W. Wallace's *Lectures and Essays*; Dr. Rashdall in *Personal Idealism*; *An Essay on Personality*, by

taking, as delicate and difficult as it is solemn. The main enterprise of the world, Emerson says somewhere, is the upbuilding of a personality. Now, this thing which we call Personality is not only the world's enterprise but its interpreter; it is what gives meaning to the world. Without Personality there would, strictly speaking, be no world at all; no moral values for the present; no lessons from the past; no great ends to aim at for the future; we should be no better than the beasts that batten in the fields of time. Whatever is done by man is the outcome of his personality—every book that is written, every deed that is done—a picture, a song, a war, a sacrifice are all utterances of the human heart, some man's interpretation of human life. All that is noble and ignoble, every virtue and every vice, the struggle for freedom and the struggle against it, heroism and crime, are all alike the expressions of Personality. A language is slowly built up by innumerable souls seeking a more adequate expression for their thoughts and feelings; a literature is nothing more than the best minds telling over to themselves and others their joys and sorrows, their anguish and

Wilfred Richmond; *The Nature of Personality*, by William Temple; Dr. Georg Misch in *Weltanschauung*.

their aspirations, what they have experienced of suffering and victory, what they have seen of glory or dismay in life. In the same way, the most primitive religion also is the work of one great personality or of many. Every religion is what men have learned of God on their journey through the temptations and trials and struggles of life. It is their interpretation of what their fathers knew and experienced, their deeper insight, their clearer, more assured conviction of what God did and meant to do. And this is true of Christianity. It is the work of a Personality, the One supreme Personality of the world's history. Doubtless it is like all religious advances a return upon an earlier religion—upon the vision of the prophets, taking its rise there. But it is much more than that; it is the interpretation of the world's life and agony by One who had seen the Father, had heard Him, knew His will, and was able to accomplish it; it is the revelation of the way of Salvation to men. Jesus lived, and taught, and died, and His Personality has ever since been the challenge and call of men to accept His friendship and His deliverance, and to become as He was. And the whole meaning of the Christian religion, of Church and Chapel, of word and prayer and sacra-

ment, is to persuade men to enter into that life and build up personalities like His. Such a Personality is not a gift, not even the gift of heaven, but a development, an achievement, and the reward of a life's faithful response to the pleading and leading of the Spirit of God. We can say that even in the case of our Lord Himself Personality was no divine gift but an achievement. He had to hunger and be tempted, to suffer as we suffer, and be made perfect through suffering. And with us too the whole purpose of life, with its fascinations and its miseries, its unending discipline of success and failure, high hopes and the depths of despair, its unspeakable visions of hell and of heaven, is that we may attain perfect manhood, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Is Education sufficient?

But the question is raised at once: Can the soul be developed into a Personality like that of Christ's by means of education? Can religion be taught? Now personal religion, signifying by the term the personal relationship of the human spirit to the divine, we can no more teach than we can preach it. The surrender of a man to the love of God can be accomplished only by the man himself, as the free choice and determination of his own spirit. And if he can surrender to God,

he can reject Him. Hence the presence among us of saints and criminals, and all the infinite diversity of character that lies between saintship and crime. Make what we may of ucation, there is manifestly something deeper.[1] John and Judas together received the same religious education, witnessed the same works done by their Master, heard the same words of grace, came in hourly contact with the same transcendent Personality; nevertheless, one of them betrayed Him, and the other wrote the Fourth Gospel: and it may be said where Christ failed we are not likely to succeed. But Christ succeeded with John and the other ten, and it would be no misuse of language to say that He succeeded by *educating* them into faith in Him. By adopting His methods, we may succeed where He succeeded. The truth is we can do for a human spirit at least as much as a gardener does for a rose. He can neither make the rose-tree, nor make it grow, but he can prepare the conditions for its growth, change them when unfavourable, give a fitting soil, set it into sunlight, protect it from frost, supply it with suitable nurture. When all is done it may wither, but gardening is

[1] We shall consider this view of the subject in a later chapter, p. 230 ff.

not therefore a blunder. Nor is the gardener's work futile because he cannot change the rose into a vine. By no human process can we change a man into an angel, unless the angel be already within him. And such we believe to be the case; there is an angel within man. We believe further that there are spiritual forces at our disposal, which when rightly applied will develop and build up the soul into what in our human conception is richer than angelic nature.

Grapes from Thorns?

The objection to relying on education as the chief means of unfolding or upbuilding the Christian Personality—an objection felt even when not stated—is due to the thought that education is too slight to bring about so high and gracious a result—it is elementary, superficial, inadequate for the needs of sinful men. It is argued that even in the child there is the natural man which cannot possibly be developed by any education into the spiritual man. Do men gather grapes of thorns? But the 'natural man' is an abstraction, and is got by leaving out of account all that is divine in the actual man, and that is a very large proportion of the actual child. Education for God is the development of the divine within. Again, education is supposed to be an attempt to dispense with the

work of grace, with the necessity of regeneration and conversion. But that objection rests on a mistaken notion both of education and the work of the Holy Spirit. It is a mistaken notion of the work of the Spirit, for it is not more difficult for the Spirit to find an entrance into the heart of a little child than into the heart of a sinful adult. And when He finds His way there as He does so often, it is as to a child, through a child's conception of good and evil, a child's affections and efforts; surely not through despair over a sinful nature which he has not yet realised, but through a happy trust in a Father's love. When our Lord associated a little child with conversion, it was not to teach the child that he could enter the Kingdom of Heaven only by the method of a man, but to lead men to turn back to their childhood. As we shall see, 'conversion' is 'reversion,' accomplished by means of an appeal to our earlier life and education—to an education which may be nothing now but a memory lying hid in the subconscious mind, but without which an entreaty to turn to God would be unmeaning. On the other hand, it is a mistaken notion also of education, which is no narrow thing. It begins earlier in life than most men dream of, and never ends

The true meaning of Education.

until they drop into the grave. 'It is hardly too much to say that education is the largest word in the vocabulary of life, for it symbolises all those forms that have raised man from the plane of the brute, all those characteristics that differentiate him from the speechless anthropoid.'[1] It is the bringing of all the accumulated spiritual experiences of the human race to bear upon the spirits of men. But it is also the bringing of them to bear slowly, steadily, skilfully, and with an assured confidence that if the fitting word is spoken at the right moment and in the right way, it will become a force in life. There are laws of the Spirit, ways which the Spirit adopts, and which when we follow them have the same result to-day as they have had in the past. Was not Christ Himself a Teacher, and is not Christianity a divine process of education ? Men speak of revivals as the main supply of the Church ; and with their immense influences we shall have to deal afterwards ; but it would seem that when men speak so they are for the moment forgetting the educative influence of the homes of Christian men. There have been long periods of the Church's history when there were no revivals, and no Christian work but

[1] *The Educative Process*, by W. C. Bagley, p. 103 f.

that of the steady teaching and preaching of the truth, and (what is vastly more important) the influences of Christian personalities, and the deep and well-nigh irresistible stream of the training and love of the home. When, forgetting this, we emphasise the necessity of a crisis or break in the religious history of every soul, however trained, we may only perplex those we mean to help. Richard Baxter himself was distressed at one time that he could recall no moment when he first gave himself to God, but was at length comforted when he reflected that 'education is as properly a means of grace as preaching,' [1] and that it had been a finer gift of heaven to him that he should have learned to love God earlier than memory began. On the other hand, we shall remember this also, that in all education, religious and intellectual, there

[1] Baxter's *Reliquiæ*: 'My next doubt was lest education and fear had done all that was ever done upon my soul, and regeneration and love were yet to seek; because I had found convictions from my childhood, and found more fear than love in all my duties and restraints, But I afterwards perceived that education is God's ordinary way for the conveyance of grace, and ought no more to be set in opposition to the Spirit than the preaching of the Word; and that it was the great mercy of God to begin with me so soon, and to prevent such sins as else might have been my shame and sorrow while I lived; and that repentance is good, but prevention and innocence is better: which though we cannot attain in perfection, yet the more the better' (pp. 6, 7).

are times of rapid growth as well as times of slow; there are moments of surprise when truths burst suddenly on the mind; there are periods of stagnation or even decay, and then times when interest is renewed and the spirit leaps up and presses forward and hastens to maturity; or there are crises and breaks and revolutions, in which old convictions and ways are thrown aside for ever. These things take place in every sphere of life, in politics, in literature, in science, in art, as well as in religion. But with the majority of men the development is slow. It is accomplished in the unrecorded, unromantic work of the home or the class-room or the study, in the open air or in the ordinary labours of the day, without struggle or passion or tragedy. By one process or another men are made. And Christian men are made by the quiet and steady pressure of the Christian resources which have been stored up through long ages, and made flesh in Christian men and women.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOUL

IN one of his essays Matthew Arnold tells a story of Mrs. Shelley, in which she exclaims: 'Teach him to think for himself? For God's sake teach him to think like other people.' That is one side of educational theory with which we all have abundant sympathy when we are forced to listen to a man who is talking without knowledge. But there is another side with which it is possible we may have deeper sympathy still, and which finds expression in words like these: 'The ideal to me is *myself* free, not another even the best that I have ever known or heard of, but myself.' And yet the writer of these true words proceeds to say: 'So far as each man's ideal is *himself*, he only can construct it in his own ideas for himself, remembering always, however, that he cannot do this apart from humanity, by solitary intellectual reflection. He must construct it while he acts,

serving man.'[1] How very strange it appears that men should ignore the immense stores of experience which the race through countless ages has slowly acquired, and take to thoughts and ways of life which have always proved disastrous. How strange also that men should think they had done enough for their fellows when they compel them to take their ways or their fathers' ways as if there were no new knowledge, no attainments made by men, no enlightenment from God, since their fathers died. The Holy Spirit has not ceased to teach merely because we are not courageous enough to learn. He does teach as freely to-day as He ever did, but always by starting us in the teaching of the past. Between this old revelation and the new freedom into which He calls us He is continually leading us to attain our true personality in order that we may be able to serve not a past generation but our own. And if we should be called on to serve our generation by teaching it, we shall do so with the experience through which we have ourselves passed, and with the experience we have learned from the labours and the sufferings of others. What then are the resources we can bring to bear upon the souls of men

[1] *Educational Ends*, by Dr. Sophie Bryant, p. 112 f.

around us that they may come to God? What are the principles by which the educative process of Christianity should be directed?

## THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE MIND

THE first of the principles is Insight or the Enlightening of the mind. In other words, life is governed by ideas. As we have seen, they are present even in the most primitive of our instincts; no emotion can arise without them; and the systems of emotion (now called sentiments) are grouped about them. As is evident on reflection, every life is shaped and governed by the idea of some end to be sought after and grasped at, by a view of life and its possibilities of happiness to be attained most surely here or there. This phantasmagoria of human enterprise, rising to high heaven or plunging headlong to hell, is the outcome of ideas, true or false. And religious education is the giving of an insight into this, gradually as the soul can bear it—the enlightening of the mind in the meaning of what is happening around—the quiet, steady, genial application of high principles to life. What a false idea can do may sometimes be seen in the life of a whole

nation. Ferdinand Brunetière[1] says that the adoption by leading men in France of the idea that morality is only a social convention has proved more disastrous to the French than the crushing defeat of the Franco-German War. What a true idea can do may be seen in the Reformation, and to-day in the awakening of the nations to social service at home or mission service abroad. And not only in nations but in families it may be seen. It is the drip, drip, drip of worldly views of life at a father's table day by day, the unworthy story, or the light laugh over sin in the smoking-room that breaks the moral power of many a young fellow and speeds him down to ruin; while, on the other hand, it is the memory of a pure home, the life and the talk there, that keeps men true and brings the wanderers back again. These are all ideas, interpretations of life conveyed in words or hints, in laughter or silence. And ideas are stronger than customs or habits; for they rest on reason, and remain with us when customs are changed.[2] We must therefore turn to

The Power of Ideas.

[1] *Sur les Chemins de la Croyance*, by Ferdinand Brunetière, ch. i.; cf. also Fouillée's *La France au Point de Vue Moral*, as well as his *Idées-Forces*.

[2] This whole question is keenly debated by the different schools of educationists, the Herbartians taking strong ground for the importance of ideas. *Vide* specially the contributions in Sir M. E.

something more permanent than custom or habit; for strong as these are in a community, they do not go deep enough into a man's being to help him in a totally new environment, nor can they enable him to work for the reformation of a custom or the laying aside of a habit that is no longer helpful. We must reach down to the source of custom and habit—to thought, to a conception of life, to an interpretation of experience, to truth and the statement of truth in ideas or doctrines. Again, it is only by ideas that we can communicate our experiences to one another, and by communicating them extend life, broaden it, deepen it. And we extend life itself by extending the circle of ideas. The Personality of a man is made greater as his interests increase. And not only so, but the Personality is more firmly assured and abler to withstand the assaults of evil according as its foundations are more broadly based on the manifold range of truth. By means of ideas, therefore, we educate. Thus from

Sadler's *Moral Instruction and Training in Schools*, and papers on Moral Education, communicated to the First International Moral Education Congress, together with the Record of the Proceedings, where both views are well represented. For the Herbartian position see Professor Adams' and Dr. Hayward's books *passim*; for the opposite see Professor Keatinge on *Suggestion in Education*.

without we can add something that builds up the soul; we bring to bear on it the experiences of others, it may be the accumulated experience of all the Christian ages with their struggles against error and their attainments in the knowledge of Christ. And yet even here the work is not external but internal. For the committing of a doctrine to memory does not make it ours. An idea is ours only when it is the expression of our own mind's activity. It may indeed be the gathering together in a single sentence of a whole world's experiences, the interpretation of the spiritual life of ten thousand souls; like a good proverb, it may be 'the wisdom of many and the wit of one.' Still, it is no idea of ours because we can repeat correctly the words that sum it up, but only when it sums up our own experience, or when our mind grasps the reality of it, or when it expresses our hopes of what life may become.

Ideas that are Relevant.

When it is objected that ideas or doctrines have in themselves no power to move the life, the meaning can only be that a given idea or doctrine may have no relevancy at present to this individual life or that. For every idea that is relevant to our condition moves us. The mere thought that a thousand pounds may be won will turn the energies of

a hundred thousand needy people on a guessing competition, or send them across land and sea to the gold-fields, or draw out their savings for a speculative investment. The mere idea that their liberties are in danger will move a whole nation; the perception of a nobler purpose in life will affect every noble mind; the clear knowledge that sin debases character, that it reappears in the lives of his children, and may determine their eternal destiny will prove far more influential in moulding a man's conduct than any custom however widely spread. To know that our character is determined by our secret thoughts and idle imaginings, and that thoughts and imaginings, however secret, burst out eventually into open action will restrain men more than the fear of punishment. And these are ideas. Ideas are never altogether inert, for they can never be altogether isolated. They are in touch with some emotion, are always on the road to some action. If you prefer it, they direct the mind's activities; they *are* the activities of the soul. That the Nazarene could heal was an idea, but it moved a ruler to cast himself in prayer at His feet, and drew a timid woman through a crowd to touch the hem of His garment. Or to take illustrations from the field of theology—that

there is a life beyond the grave, that men are judged at last by the deeds done in the body, that God is able to save them to the uttermost, that there is reconciliation through the death of Jesus Christ, that God is a merciful Father, that there is power to cleanse and renew the soul at the disposal of the weakest—these are doctrines, ideas of the most abstract kind, but they are also forces that have transformed the lives of unnumbered multitudes of the human race. And these we can teach, and (if they have set our own souls on fire) can teach them so that they will kindle the souls of others.

Roman Catholic Education.

We can understand then the temptation to make the teaching of Christian doctrines the very heart and breath of all religious teaching. To drill and discipline the mind into the belief that they are the key to all true thinking and the strength of all right action, to work them into the very tissue of the life of every day, that would be a kind of teaching that would most likely endure. The truth of this statement is perhaps most manifest in the training which the Roman Catholic Church gives its young people. They say, and say with much truth: 'Give us the command of the child and youth and we do not much care what you do with the

man.' Testimony to the effectiveness of their method is borne by those who have occasion to observe it both at home and abroad. Even at the Missionary Conference of all the Protestant Churches, held in Edinburgh in 1910, frank acknowledgment was made of their power in the mission field. And we can understand it. Through their use of an elaborate and symbolic ritual they establish from the very earliest years a practice, a custom and habit that becomes a second nature; they give a child a part to perform for itself, a vital share in the religious life; through a careful training in the doctrine of the church they give meaning to the custom and practice, linking it with the thought of God. They tie up life in all its departments into the bundle of their church and the eternal realities; they make every part of life suggestive of God; they catch even the inmost secrets of the heart through confession, and bring them to the church for judgment. One cannot read works on the subject, such a work, for example, as *La Discipline*, by P. Emmanuel Barbier, without recognising that their system must have the profoundest influence upon the average life. Speaking of the Jesuits (and it is the Jesuits who have been the great

originators of the Roman system of education) Père Barbier says: 'Discipline is the soul of their moral education.' The child is under the direction of a trained prefect, who walks with him, enters into his life at every turn, takes to do with every act, watches with a keen eye for every human defect, and plies him in the subtlest way with spiritual methods that have been evolved through centuries, and found effective to reach the desired end. From morning to night this has gone on, in the open and in their rooms. Barbier says that the master or prefect who carries this out 'is an apostle; and the master and model of the Apostles is Jesus Christ.' Certainly the system is one that wins the admiration of any one who is able to delight in thorough work. First through fear, then through respect, then through love, and then through reason, this master gets at the very heart of the young life, and directs it with amazing skill towards his and the church's end. What shall we say of it? That brings us straight into the presence of our second educational principle.

## FREEDOM OF THE SOUL TO SERVE

PERHAPS the greatest word in education is the word Freedom. That for which we educate at all is to make the soul free—free from everything that would hinder its attaining its own fullest power, whether the hindrance be from without or from within, free to deal with God Himself at first-hand. This was the prophetic ideal, and it is the ideal of Christian education to-day. This freedom has the double movement of dying and living, of escape from the snare and flight into the blue; there is no freedom in passing from one form of bondage to another, of exchanging one mortal malady for another. The mind may be swept and garnished, and the man be more enslaved than before. Still, we escape from ourselves, from our teachers, from our environment, only by idealising them, *i.e.* by using them for spiritual ends. We have the power always of transforming the very basest educational metal into gold. If only we could do this, only keep the soul free! But before we are aware, the world has caught us with its ceaseless, bewitching appeal to the senses. The child is eager to learn, to possess, to act; it is ignorant, yet ready to try any path that promises pleasure;

it has instincts urging it to make the most of its own life greedily ; it is driven on by nature to act—to act anyhow. All this at first seems to make environment the most powerful of all influences, and character but the creature of it. But as Professor Jones says,[1] 'Psychology has made no greater gain in recent years than this, the perception that character and environment cannot be separated.' A man and his world are one. The same environment will aid one man in the accomplishment of noble service, another man in becoming a blight on society. Whether a child born in poverty will turn out well or ill depends on something else than the poverty. Poverty will no more make him a criminal than prosperity will make him a good man. Each condition brings with it its own peculiar temptations, but temptations depend on the mind for their force.

Character and Environment.

> 'The mind is its own place,
> And in itself can make a heaven of hell,
> A hell of heaven.'

That, however, does not mean that environment avails nothing. At the formative stage of life it is of vital importance. A child born in the slums is a child of the slums in two

[1] *The Working Faith of the Social Reformer*, by Professor Henry Jones, ch. ii., vi.

senses. An experience of early misery may burn itself into the memory and influence a lifetime. The young learn their deepest lessons before they know they are learning at all. Even where their surroundings are not vicious or criminal, they may have learned to be hard, narrow, bitter. How much more when the surroundings are at their worst may they be trained in deceit and cruelty and sin ; and if that should be the case, then do what we may with them in the future, there will remain indelible scars on their souls.

Environment is Opportunity.

This does not imply that the material environment has made the character ; it has only presented the opportunity for the development of character. Environment in itself is nothing but a summons to the soul to act. A mishap to a pauper's funeral nearly a century ago moved the officials attending it to laughter, but moved young Ashley Cooper to enter on a career which made him the Lord Shaftesbury of fame—one of the greatest of social reformers. In the same way, sorrow has made some men unbelievers and taught others how to heal the broken-hearted. As Alfred de Musset puts it :—

> 'Rien ne nous rend si grand qu'une grande douleur.'

The truth is that after boyhood we take our own moral fate by the hand and lead it where we will. We can make any circumstances work for good. We create our own world. We create it by selecting those things we like best from the infinite universe around us. The language we speak is no doubt determined for us by the land of our birth, but not what we shall utter in it or read in it, when we have learned to speak and read. Of two men living in the same street, one will absorb the good of life, the other the evil. The crowded street will suggest to one mind the writing of a book, to another the painting of a picture, to a third a social problem, to a fourth some sin, and to a fifth a new consecration to God—to each according to his character. It is the soul always that acts, the environment only presents the occasion of acting, only calls the soul out into activity. There is truth in saying that in the same acts we create both our world and our own souls.

We create our own World.

With the young the only environment that matters is the spiritual—the courage of home in meeting adversity; the ambition to make something of themselves in the future; faith in uprightness and God. The significant matter for them and for all is the mood of mind they catch, the spirit they breathe

daily. There is a public opinion in the home and the school and the community which is more vital in the formation of character than any adversity or prosperity. The power which this public opinion has of imposing itself upon us without our knowing goes by the name of 'suggestion.' All are unconsciously and unceasingly imitating modes of thought and behaviour, conforming in most things to the ways of those about them. Even those who set themselves to defy the public opinion of which they are conscious may perhaps be only yielding to another public opinion too subtle for them to detect. A hooligan defies the police and the settled order of the nation, but acts for the applause of the public-house which he knows is waiting for him. At the opposite pole of the moral world, the martyr for civil or religious liberty may hear with his ears the yells of a frantic mob, but with his soul the praise of good men in other lands or other times, or it may be the 'Well done!' of God Himself. We are all encompassed with a cloud of witnesses, in whose sight we are running our race to some goal or other. It is our spiritual not our material environment that fashions us. And that environment Education provides.

Spiritual Environment.

But freedom means also freedom from

Freedom from ourselves.

ourselves, from our own past. The Christian religion is the recognition of the awful power of past sin and the proclamation of a way of deliverance, and of that we shall speak at another time ; but at present we are thinking of what may be good enough in itself and yet a bondage. The fact is, every deed we do tends to fix us down to a future course of action, and we do them by the thousand every day. We are busy tying ourselves up, fettering ourselves to what is at least imperfect. A fine illustration of this is given by Professor Walter Raleigh in his work on Wordsworth, where he speaks of the poet's passionate attachment to the people in contrast to the indifference that many of their leaders show. He quotes a sentence from the 'Borderers' in which are set forth the transitory nature of action and the permanent nature of suffering.

> 'Action is transitory—a step, a blow,
> The motion of a muscle—this way or that—
> 'Tis done, and in the after-vacancy
> We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed :
> Suffering is permanent, obscure, and dark,
> And shares the nature of infinity.'

Professor Raleigh adds these penetrating words : 'A great crisis in human affairs usually closes the education of those who take part in it. They make their choice by the

best of their lights, and then, whether they win or lose, pride does the rest.'[1] In our lesser way and our own obscure place we all take a side, speak our opinion, strike our blow, and then defend it through thick and thin, fight for it, or perhaps suffer for it. We were wrong and have a dim notion of it, or (what is worse) have not the dimmest notion how far wrong we were. No matter, right or wrong, we have closed that chapter of our education.

An Endless Process.

From this we must be set free; for education, whether it be literary or religious, is a process that has no end. Both for the individual and the world education is a process that is endless in its power of widening, enlarging, and liberating. It is the liberating of us from the men we are to-day that in the future we may become the men God meant us to be. We must forget the things behind, our positions and our attainments, press on to things still before us, and keep running to the infinite goal. Finality is the one heresy. But it is no easy matter to keep free. A discarded view of life hangs about us long as a vague sentiment, or as a misgiving that our new view is false; an open sin or even blunder committed long ago will keep us silent now when

[1] *Wordsworth*, by Professor Walter Raleigh, p. 55.

we ought to speak, and impulses which we used to obey waste our strength to-day in the checking. We feel continually that we are clogged and cannot get free. And what disappoints us most is this, that the very men to whom we owe the most—our friends who helped, directed, encouraged us, our teachers who delivered us and gave us, as it were, our own souls—these men may come to bar the way of our advance. Not even the divinest external authority could avoid impairing the best action of men. Our Lord Himself seemed to realise that His bodily presence would check the free growth of His disciples to the fulness of their power and their perfect reliance upon the Divine Spirit. 'It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away the Counsellor will not come unto you.' If Apostles had to be set free from the Divine Teacher and thrown back upon the Spirit, so must we from our teachers. From every teacher, strong or weak, men must be freed, for they can reach their highest manhood only through the coming of the Spirit within them—their highest both in free initiative and in achievement. Here we meet the answer Protestants must always give to the impressive system of Roman Catholic teaching.

Our freedom is our inherent right to deal with God at first-hand, to think of God just as God has revealed Himself to us. It is true that it is of the utmost value to teach men that thus and thus God has met with His children, that His children have found this method and that, this statement and that of importance to them in the understanding of God's ways. Our personal faith is at first attained in the faith of a community, and this too although there is much in it that is false and imperfect. The community may be superstitious, may have cast its religion into forms of myths or crude doctrines. But these at the beginning of the spiritual life may act as the shell to the kernel which in the end will burst the shell and spring up into fulness of life. To obey is the first condition of learning; belief is prior to the spirit of inquiry. The child comes before the man, and authority comes before freedom. But authority is of value only until manhood is reached; law is in force until the personal experience of Christ is attained. When a man asks for freedom in spiritual matters he is asking for liberty to deal with God in answer to the dealing of God with him. God has something to say to every one, something which to him is new and fresh and original.

Freedom and Authority.

However often the revelation may have been made before, however commonplace it may seem to those who have lived the Christian life for years, it must be received afresh by every one, or he is no Christian at all. Now, the experience which the youth receives from God may come to him along the line of the doctrine he has learned; the doctrine may form the mould into which the experience is run, and may remain for him the only true expression of that experience. But it may not. Again and again in the history of the Church of Christ the traditional expression has been found exceedingly hurtful, strangling the truth. The shell that at first conserved the life threatened to destroy the life, and required to be broken that the life go free. St. Paul did this for all time; Luther did it; it will be done again. The new wine bursts the old wine-skin. If doctrines are the translation of spiritual experiences into terms of the intellect, they are sure to be translated into the intellectual terms of the time, and to be coloured by the prevailing system of thought. To that extent it will seem to later generations a mistranslation, and will some day require retranslation. But just so far as the doctrine has been the translation of a real experience it will have authority over

all; and no man who realises the value of the past would think of casting aside such a statement without misgiving. It is not likely that he alone should be right and generations of Christian thinkers wrong. Nevertheless, it would be fatal to the life of the church if these doctrines were placed, as they are placed by the Roman Catholic Church, beyond the reach of consideration and revisal. After all, what every kind of education must have in view is the bringing of God into the experience of every man; and without the slightest doubt, the best way in which this can be done is to present the living Christ, and to leave Christ to produce His own impression on the mind. But the presentation of the living Christ may be at a certain age by means of statements about Christ; in other words, by the opening up of the deep significance of the doctrines concerning His person or His work; or it may be in the earlier years by the portrayal of the incidents of His life; or again by contact with the actual lives of Christian men, or by stories of what they were enabled to do in former times. But in any case, it is the living Christ that does the saving work, the meeting of spirit with spirit. There is present even in the church what has been called 'educational

Freedom for God.

materialism '—a belief in the sufficiency for the young of religious information, of historical fact, and acquaintance with catechism and creed. Valuable as these may become, their value lies in their power of bringing up again an experience, a spiritual experience to the mind of the learner; if doctrine fails in that it fails in everything. But when that has been in reality attained the soul has been called into its freedom, and can speak of the things of Christ for itself. Men even in our Protestant churches often fear this freedom of the human spirit, and would prefer in the interests of the Faith a rigid scheme of doctrine; but this is limiting the guidance of the Spirit to the days of our fathers; it is doubting His ability to guide us now. If we of to-day truly believe, He is our teacher; and if He is our teacher, we are free to follow Him into whatever knowledge of Christ He opens up.

### THE UNIFYING OF THE SOUL

THAT brings us to the third great word of Education: the Unifying of the Self or Personality. It corresponds to the 'perfect heart' of the Old Testament, and was probably in the mind of the Psalmist when

he prayed: 'Unite my heart to fear Thy name.' The danger in every life is distraction, the splitting of the aim and scattering of the attention; in the moral life the vacillating and endless hesitating and shilly-shallying over duty or over the giving of oneself to the worthier cause. Now, the truth is we are each of us as it were composed of many 'selves,' and therefore find it hard to be long in one stay. We ourselves have homes and workshops, and literary or social clubs, and political parties and churches. Other men, we observe, have besides certain inconstancies and inconsistencies in character; they are lambs at home and lions abroad, or perhaps lions at home and lambs abroad; they are generous to the church and hard to their workers; they are ferocious in debate and complaisant in the extreme to their wives and children. Even Christian men try one another with their variableness. Father Faber with a fine touch of exaggeration says: 'Religious people are an unkindly lot.' [1] Now education, and above all religious education, unifies the self. Professor Münsterberg [2] says

[1] *Spiritual Conferences*, by F. W. Faber, p. 16.

[2] *Problems of To-day*, by Professor Hugo Münsterberg. 'Human nature is indeed so arranged that the attention at first follows in an involuntary way all that is shining, loud, sensational,

that the only formal gain we make in our school education is the power of concentrating the mind on a subject. Well, Religion gives a subject great enough to catch up and fix the attention. To 'unite the heart,' to unify the self, most of us need a great subject. And we must give ourselves to it, as Moses said, as Christ said, with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our strength, and all our mind. In other words, it must be a passion with us, a consecration, an enthusiasm. This is what Conversion does swiftly, in youth or mature years, but what Education can do as completely—in many lives much more completely—according to its slow and thorough method. But there is a negative side to this which is often forgotten, and yet is indispensable for the beauty of Christian character. This negative movement or self-restraint comes through some kind of devotion.

Through fixing the Attention.

and surprising. The real development of mankind lies in the growth of the voluntary attention, which is not passively attracted, but which turns actively to that which is important and significant and valuable in itself. No one is born with such a power. It has to be trained and educated. Yes, perhaps the deepest meaning of education is to secure this mental energy which emancipates itself from haphazard stimulations of the world, and firmly holds that which conforms to our purpose and ideals. This great function of education is too much neglected' (p. 17). Cf. the same writer's *Psychology and the Teacher*, ch. xviii., on Attention.

Inhibition always accompanies concentrated attention. Attention fixed on a good action or a good person shuts out every thought of evil. 'I obeyed,' says Ruskin in recalling the training of his home,[1] 'I obeyed word or lifted finger of father and mother simply as a ship her helm; not only without idea of resistance, but receiving the direction of my own life and force, a helpful law, as necessary to me in every moral action as the law of gravity in leaping.' But this implicit obedience to a parent is of no value except as a step towards a man's obedience to his own spirit within, and towards that inner liberation that lifts the spirit out of the bondage of the flesh. 'I was not disobedient to the Heavenly Vision,' said Paul. There is no government worth the name but self-government, and all other government should lead to it. This is manhood, and we are children until we reach it. The self of the instincts and impulses must be brought into obedience to the spirit, the whole being unified, and a harmony established where there might be mere confusion. Before this is accomplished there may be a long severe struggle, although there need be none. When the struggle comes the spirit needs strength, hardihood,

Through Obedience.

[1] *Preterita*, by John Ruskin.

indifference to suffering. The tendency of our time to provide escape from struggle, to resent difficulties, or to offer a soft and tender sympathy to those who have burdens to bear is disastrous. The truest sympathy is shown by those who awaken courage and fortitude and determination to press on. The young are more daring and more enduring than their elders often know, and even the weak take delight in sacrifice. In nothing else does Christ's knowledge of the human heart come out more clearly than in His frank appeal for endurance; He was too wise to make the path easy, to smooth out the roughnesses of the Christian's career, or to hide the cross that must come into every life and be borne by every disciple of His. This girding of men's strength, this pulling of them together, this confiding in their hardihood and native force, this imputing to them of what we wish to develop in them—this educates, for it brings about the effort to restrain the lower nature and to rise out of its power into the freedom of Christ.

Through Hardship.

There is perhaps no power for the unification of the Personality at all to be compared with devotion to a noble Personality. The Personality may not be great as the world counts greatness, nor educated, nor talented, nor even

Through a Great Personality.

in force of character noteworthy. But if it has some measure of the charm that comes from contact with things that are true and honourable and just and pure and lovely and of good report, it will lift the young into the atmosphere of heaven, and abide with them in memory and feeling and vision as a wall of fire to protect them from evil. In order to make the subconscious life rich and strong we fill up infancy and early youth with happy experiences, with all that is worthiest, bravest, manliest. That is what a Christian home, and nothing but a Christian home, can do, has done through the love of untold multitudes of Christian men and women in the past, and is doing through their love to-day. The public opinion of the home makes itself felt by the frank approval of a good deed done or a generous word spoken, by the evident pain at the sight of evil and the joy over good, by the encouragement of every earnest effort in a worthy cause.

Through the Christian Home.

> 'We live by admiration, hope, and love,'

and the Christian home keeps admiring and loving only those persons and actions that are worthy of admiration and love. Add to these influences playing continually upon the mind, the more directly Christian appeal

of the return of the hour for prayer, a hymn, the chance sight of a parent reading the Bible in secret, the walk to church through crowded street or across the moor, the practice in continual acts of kindly service to others, the peace of home which Ruskin describes as 'the best and truest beginning of all blessings,'—these are, it is true, slight enough in themselves, but they are the abiding possession and strength of many a good man in the thick of life's battle, and as memories of a happier time become the opportunity of the Spirit's appeal to the man who has strayed far enough away from God. But whence have all these blessings come? The Christian home and the Christian community are perhaps the most remarkable of human achievements. But they are at the same time the creation of the Holy Spirit dwelling in man; they are as much His work as our repentance or our aspirations or prayers; they are not less gracious in their influence on the soul than the most direct appeal of preacher or prophet. And they are portions of Christian Education.[1]

[1] For this whole conception of Education *vide* Professor Millicent Mackenzie's *Hegel's Educational Theory and Practice*; Dr. Bryant's *Educational Ends*; Professor H. H. Horne's *Philosophy of Education*; *Moral Education*, by Edward Howard Griggs; Herbart's works.

The issue is, beyond all contradiction, of the deepest and most permanent kind known in the Christian Church. It cometh not with observation, but it is in the midst of us. If the records of Christian homes were kept and the story of their work were told, it would transcend all other Christian work together. Richard Baxter expressed his belief that if Christian parents did their duty to their children, preaching would soon cease to be the ordinary means of converting sinners. Even as it is, and all imperfectly as this most valuable work is done, there is ground for rejoicing. And those who believe in it will always view with jealousy any movement, albeit a Christian movement, that would tend to give the home even a second place.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PLACE OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOUL

IN addition to what we have said concerning Personality, there is another conception which has recently come into the very foremost place in all discussions of its nature. We refer to what is called the Subconscious. Older books on Psychology make either no mention of it or only the scantiest; but nowadays whole volumes are written on it, constant references are made to it in all kinds of books, and men of education will speak of it in ordinary conversation as if they were speaking of what every one understood. In the popular mind it is no longer considered one of the obscure things of life, but rather a means of explaining obscure things. Professor James says :—

'I cannot but think that the most important step forward that has occurred in Psychology since I have been a student of the science is the discovery, first made in 1886, that in certain subjects at least

there is not only a consciousness of the ordinary field with its usual centre and margin, but an addition thereto in the shape of a set of memories, thoughts, and feelings, which are extra-marginal and outside of the primary consciousness altogether, but yet must be classed as conscious facts of some sort, able to reveal their presence by unmistakable signs.' [1]

Not only so, but the term is used to cover all those strange and mysterious phenomena in the mental life of which we read such startling stories. Thus Professor Angell writes :—

'The unconscious has been made in recent years the great panacea for all psychological and philosophical difficulties. Whatever one cannot explain otherwise may be explained by the action of the unconscious. The asserted facts of telepathy, clairvoyance, crystal-gazing, shell-hearing, hypnotism, and all the phenomena of spiritualism, not less than the metaphysical perplexities of personality, mind, matter, and their interrelations, have been treated by the universal elixir of the subconscious.' [2]

## GROWTH OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND

IN dealing with this difficult subject it may not be amiss to recall some of the elementary facts of our mental life. In looking out

[1] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 233.
[2] *Psychology*, by J. R. Angell, p. 395.

The Field of Consciousness.

at the window I see what may be called a picture of the immediate neighbourhood: there is an iron balcony, a garden with grass and trees, houses on the opposite side of the square, and the blue sky beyond. It is possible that if my mind is deeply absorbed none of these things will be seen at all; but if my mind is at leisure I shall see all of them at once. A bird settles on the balcony, and attracting my attention becomes immediately the centre of my field of vision; and trees, houses, and blue sky become blurred and dim, and as psychologists say, pass to the margin of the field. They are there, but are unheeded. In the margin of this field of vision a movement attracts the attention to the house across the square, and on looking there I observe a child playing at an open window. The child is now the centre of the field, and bird and balcony have become blurred and dim, still present but in the margin. But the child is now leaning over the window, is stretching herself over more and more, and I become alarmed because no one seems to be near, and she may overbalance herself and fall. My attention is riveted and my whole soul made tense; and now everything that was in my mind has disappeared from consciousness, has passed as it were over the

margin and away into some region of which I know nothing. Well, that took place yesterday, and since yesterday none of it has ever occurred to my mind. Yet to-day I can recall it all, my humorous observance of the bird, my alarm and anxiety concerning the child. Where has it all been in the meantime? It has not been lost, since I can recall it; nor wasted, seeing I use it now. We say it has been out of mind. Has it? That is the question of the subconscious. Psychologists are now saying that while these incidents of yesterday have, it is true, been out of the conscious mind, they have been present in the subconscious. They have been present in memory, we say; but memory, although one of the most familiar words we use, is a word that covers one of the most mysterious of all our mental facts. There are yet other facts in the subconscious sphere quite as familiar as this one of memory, *e.g.* our habits of thinking, speaking, or acting. The subtlety and delicacy and ease of an accomplished speaker is a matter to him almost entirely subconscious; all skill in a trade or in painting or in the playing of a musical instrument is subconscious; the movement of a fine skater on the ice, the poise of his body, the sweep of the curves he makes are subconscious.

'Out of Mind.'

It is the aim of those who are seeking the higher life to reduce as much as possible of the ordinary matters of daily work to the sphere of the subconscious in order that what is deliberate and conscious may be set free for what is worthiest.

All this, of course, has been well known since men began to attend to the operations of their own minds, and did not need to be discovered. What psychologists are now dealing with to such extent, as we have seen, is the influence of this subconscious upon the conscious life. It is described not only as a storehouse for our memories of the past, but as the workshop in which the most valuable of our mental operations are carried on unseen and unsuspected: 'It is an exhaustless fountain-head for ever pouring out fresh conceptions as from some unseen laboratory.'

Professor James.

Professor James himself uses these words concerning it:—

> It is 'the abode of everything that is latent, the reservoir of everything that passes unrecorded or unobserved. It contains, for example, such things as all our momentarily inactive memories, and it harbours the springs of all our obscurely motived passions, impulses, likes, dislikes, and prejudices; our intentions, hypotheses, fancies, superstitions, persuasions, convictions, and in general all our non-

rational operations come from it. It is the source of our dreams, and apparently they may return to it. In it arise whatever mystical experiences we may have, and our automatism, sensory or motor; our life in hypnotic and hypnoid conditions, if we are subject to such conditions; our delusions, fancies, ideas, and hysterical accidents, if we are hysteric subjects; our supra-normal cognitions, if such there be, and if we are telepathic subjects. It is also the fountain-head of much that feeds our religion. In persons deep in the religious life, as we have abundantly seen—and this is my conclusion —the door into this region seems unusually wide open; at any rate experiences making their entrance through that door have had emphatic influence in shaping religious history.' [1]

From the closing words of that extract we can discern how important the study of the subconscious is for those who are trying to understand what the personality is, and what part religion is entitled to hold in the life.

It would seem necessary in this region of human experience that we be peculiarly on our guard in the use of figurative language. Indispensable as figurative language is, it is also a source of danger, and we must therefore be specially alert, reminding ourselves that pictures of mental states are only pic-

[1] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 483.

tures, and observing, when we speak of the *sub*conscious, that in matters of mind there is neither sub nor super, neither upper nor under, neither depth nor height. The states of which we are speaking are mental, *i.e.* a mind has thought them, felt them, willed them; they do not exist save in a soul or self. When we say the mind does this or that we mean that it is the person whose mind is acting that has done it. Whether we have been attending to what has taken place or not, it is *we* who have passed through the experience, and our mind has acted. The experience is one that has taken place in our soul or self, or it has not taken place at all. An idea is an activity of the mind, and cannot be surreptitiously implanted or imported into the mind from without. The same is true of a feeling or a volition. Volitions, feelings, thoughts are the activities of a person who is dealing with one situation or another which has been presented to him. A suggestion may be so subtle that he does not detect it, or so powerful that he is borne away by it; it may be made by event, or person, or only a word; but it is no suggestion to him until his mind has dealt with it in some manner or another. It has led him to think, or made him feel, or summoned him to action. It is

Activities of the Self.

not *in him* in any form whatever until his spirit has dealt with it. That it is not altogether superfluous to make so simple a statement as this will be evident when we remember that at the present moment men are inclined to place the prevailing power of God in the subconscious, forgetting that whatever operation may be placed there must be an operation of the person himself, and that for a wise man (and God is wise) it is as easy to make a subtle suggestion of good to the conscious mind as it would be to make it to the subconscious, supposing such a thing possible. But if what we have said is true, then there is no such thing as a *passive* mental experience. No communication can be made to us, however subtle, without our mind's activity. To us it is no idea at all until it has been dealt with by our own minds, accepted or rejected, seen to be true or doubtful or false. We, the thinking persons, cannot be left out of account; we must sooner or later be appealed to, must be won as thinking persons. The full content of what we do see may not be manifest to us, and may come to our knowledge only after years have passed away; but the same can be said of everything. We receive nothing unless it brings some meaning to us at the time, whence-

soever it may come. Without the mind's activity it *is* nothing.

The Enriching of the Self.

But, on the other hand, every activity of the self enriches the self. No matter what the experience may be it does not pass away without changing the soul, modifying it, strengthening or weakening it, purifying or debasing it, lifting it perhaps only a hair's breadth towards high heaven, or leaving it still grovelling the more in the earth. It is very doubtful indeed whether the self or Ego is ever simple and indivisible, but certainly it ceases to be simple after its first experience. To that extent it has become complex, and more and still more it increases in complexity as the experiences grow. Our way of thinking, our mode of feeling, our actions and the direction of them, are all influenced permanently by these experiences which come to us without cessation throughout all our days. And it is the self, or soul, or Ego that is modified. Conscious or unconscious, it remains the self or Ego, but enriched finally with all the content of what we call the Personality. That is no reason why we should not on occasion and for the purposes of thought abstract from this existent Personality and speak of the germ of it or the original Ego. But that Ego is an abstrac-

tion, and now no longer exists in any human being.

We come next to consider the influence of all this vast and complex experience of the soul upon the new experiences as they arise.[1] It is this enriched soul that deals with the new thought that is presented to it, the new occasion of pleasure or pain, the new call to action; it is the experienced person (and every person is experienced) that acts, and his every action is at least partly determined by that experience. The word 'home' has a clear meaning to every one who hears it, but the meaning that each one attaches to it is due to the memory which it awakens within him of his own home, modified it may be by his reading and his dreams of what a home might be made. To most men the meaning is pleasant, but to no two men is it exactly the same; to some it recalls only wrangling and bitterness and sin. Even when in ordinary speech it brings up

Apperception.

[1] This whole principle of Apperception has become a commonplace with educationists of the Herbartian school, and is very fully dealt with in the modern books on Education. Reference might be made to the works of Professor John Adams: *Herbartian Psychology* and *Exposition and Illustration in Teaching*, both of them most instructive and entertaining books. *Vide* also Sully's *Teacher's Handbook of Psychology*; Münsterberg's *Psychology and the Teacher*; Karl Lange's *Apperception*.

no distinct memory at all, there is yet present in the mind what one might call a subconscious ' overtone ' to which we give little or no heed. The same is true of every word, of every religious word. And a religious word will bring up in the mind of almost every one in a land like ours something of the same meaning, because fundamentally we all have the same spiritual nature, have all received some Christian training, have seen the same Christian institutions, and read books with references to Christianity. We attach approximately identical meanings to such words as God, sin, salvation, judgment, heaven, hell. But we make a fatal mistake if we forget that the force of every one of these and all other words is affected by the subconscious memory, thought, and experience of the hearer. To one man the word ' Bible ' suggests a schoolbook which he hated because it was taught by a teacher whom he disliked ; to another man a quarry for texts ; to another the Word of life everlasting. The very utterance of the word ' religion ' makes this one recoil, draws that one with irresistible power ; ' God ' to one man means a heavenly Father who sent His Son to earth to redeem all, but to another it means a Judge whom he fears, and from whom Christ came to deliver us. There

is nothing that ever can be accepted by our mind which has not touched and awakened the subconscious somewhere. There must be some connection between the new and the old, or the new finds no place in the mind; some feeling or idea arises to bid the newcomer welcome and to claim kinship with it. Without this welcome and kinship the newcomer could not possibly be received, for an idea that is absolutely new is absolutely unintelligible, and is therefore for us no idea at all. We never hear a word spoken that is not interpreted by the subconscious; never see a landscape that is not coloured by it; never have a desire, or a hope, or a fear that does not spring out of it. Of the tens of thousands of impressions that come to us every day—the sights and sounds, the trivial acts and employments, the pin-pricks of annoyance, the fillips of pleasure, turns at work or play, words spoken in idleness and heard without heeding—of all these the vast majority are quickly forgotten. But, as we have seen, not one has passed without leaving its trace behind, not the slightest triviality has been wasted, and any of it may some day be recalled. They disappear like the dead leaves of the forest, but like dead leaves form the very soil from which the future giants

of the forest spring. Nevertheless, the subconscious is the veritable self, entering into the new experience, dealing with it, absorbing it, and in dealing with it conscious of it. The subconscious becomes conscious for a time and then subconscious again. In other words, some element of the self that was quiescent becomes in this mental operation active, and then quiescent again.

'Systems' of Thought

We are here brought into contact with another characteristic of the subconscious which we must now consider.[1] The whole self is not active in every mental operation—at least not equally active. In the familiar although inaccurate speech of ordinary conversation we say that a man consists of many selves. He may at the same time be a politician, a scientist, a writer of poems, the blameless father of a family, and an office-bearer in a Christian church. At one moment he may be so absorbed in the solution of some problem that he forgets his sick child, or so absorbed in political debate that he forgets his science, or so absorbed in his child that he is oblivious to the whole world beyond the limits of the sick-room. In some minds these systems become permanently separate, in

[1] For the idea of Systems, and on Apperception generally, *vide* Stout's *Analytic Psychology*, II. ch. viii.; Sully, p. 225, etc.

others they blend. One man keeps his theology entirely beyond the reach of his science; another will have them in perpetual warfare; another still will find no inconsistency in applying one method to his science and a method quite contradictory of it to his religion. Notwithstanding this, the mind tends in every one to systematise or synthesise its ideas. When two foreign languages have been mastered they remain apart. A new phrase of German passes into the German group, and not into the French. If perchance one has been speaking French for a considerable time there will be a few days or weeks of confusion when one begins German again, words of French or English presenting themselves with provoking persistency; but by and by the system emerges complete, and the confusion ends. In the same way there is in the mature life a system of moral or religious ideas in the subconscious. The most commonplace moral situation will at once call forth the moral system, and the decision we make will pass into that system to strengthen or weaken it for the next occasion—in the one case making the moral system more and more apt to emerge, in the other case helping to bury it beyond recall. What we describe as moral tact is the expression of a sub-

conscious perception, the instinctive outcome of this grouping of words, perceptions, and judgments of the past, which may have been completely forgotten, but none of which have been lost. When the Apostle Paul writes: 'I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all moral tact; that ye may distinguish things that differ; so that ye may be pure and without offence unto the day of Christ,' he evidently has his eye on this delicate discernment in the mind of a true Christian. The instantaneous admiration of a generous act, or the explosive denunciation of an act of baseness, is the utterance of a moment, but is the expression of the long and slow testing and brooding of a lifetime.

The Forming of 'Systems.'

This systematising in the mind we can detect in the process of formation. Let a man, for example, come to some clear decision on a matter of vital importance, say on giving up business for mission work as Matthew did, or a fine career in order to join a despised sect as Paul did, or on leaving father and mother and wife and child as Christ asked His disciples to do. The man has finally resolved. From that moment confirmation and encouragement will come to him from every direction every day, will stand out on the

printed page of a book or a newspaper; his friends, he finds, without thinking of it, refer to the subject; the speeches of public men touch on it; the whole world conspires to strengthen him in his resolution. Of course, the same thing happens if he determines to live for sin. But the explanation is that the fully resolved mind is selecting what harmonises with it from the infinite variety of the world's life, and rejecting what is opposed to it—is, in fact, creating a universe for itself. And this not deliberately and on purpose, but through the instinct of the subconscious. Thus the subconscious is continually influencing the conscious life, and seems to go foraging through time and space to supply its needs. And yet the subconscious life is only the life of the self, the one self which we all are. It is we who are snatching up approval of our actions and resolutions, we who are subordinating the universe of men and nature to our own ends. When we say that the subconscious is a 'workshop' in which idea acts on idea, and feeling modifies feeling, and that past ideas and feelings that have been 'stored' in the subconscious come up into the light with 'their edges rubbed off,' we shall always remember that an idea is nothing but an activity of the self, that a

Ideas do not act on Ideas.

feeling is a reaction of the self, and that it is *we* and not our ideas that have been active, that it is *we* who have modified our old conceptions because of new, and our feelings because of fuller insight; and that when the outcome of all is an action, it is not the will that has performed the action but we who have willed it and done it.[1]

Out of that deep of instincts, feelings, rich endowment, moral capacity, and the accumulated ideas and aspirations and struggles of a lifetime come forth Personalities which we describe as saints, prophets, and reformers, on the one hand, or on the other as criminals, wastrels, and debauchees; or (it may be) a commonplace worker who fulfils his duty faithfully and at last drops into his grave known and loved by none but his friends. All this is determined by the indissoluble solidarity of a man's original force, and his training, and his own conduct. But neither the spiritual life of a prophet nor the spiritual darkness of a criminal is due to the irruption of a power foreign to his own soul. Just as we cannot speak a language we have

[1] It would seem that some of the difficulty Dr. Sanday experiences in understanding the criticism of his friends is due to his neglecting this simple position. *Personality in Christ and in Ourselves, passim.* In his illustration the pin-cushion and the pins are one, the gardener and his garden are one.

not learned, so we cannot do deeds that have not occurred to us, nor utter prophecies that are not our own intuitions. The subconscious may no doubt be the fountain-head of all invention, of all heroism, and of all inspiration; but it is only because the subconscious is the man himself, trained, disciplined by deliberate thought and conscious effort to be inventor, or hero, or prophet. The man to whom a proposal is suddenly made gives his answer, swift (it may be) and ill-considered, but the answer, nevertheless, of a life's experience, the expression of his Personality with its original constitution and its education of many years. We cannot step into the same stream twice, nor can we step into it twice the same man; we have become another man by stepping into it once. Of the awful stream of life this is true indeed; our first act modifies our experience, adds to a prejudice or tends to remove it, transforms life by revealing new aspects of the world or of humanity, by opening up new hopes and admirations or damping them down. As the accomplished mathematician of to-day rests on the efforts of his boyhood in mastering his sums, so does the Christian man's swift impulse of forgiveness, or his steady labour in reclaiming others, rest on unremembered vain

Personal Solidarity.

attempts at it in earlier days; on brooding over many failures and resolving to try again; on aspirations, prayers, agonies, and exultations, all forgotten long ago, yet safely preserved in the soul's experience, *i.e.* in the subconscious mind. To take an illustration from the highest reach of literature, we can say that the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah must have been written by one who had lying deep within him the results of long fellowship with God, lessons from his own temptations and struggles and sufferings and anguish of heart over Israel, all which gave him this amazing insight into the meaning and power of the patient endurance of the Servant of Jehovah.

### THE ABNORMAL IN THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND

BUT it will be said that these are by no means all the possibilities of human personality. There are other and greater powers in us which may not yet be fully understood, but which give promise of helpfulness in moral and Christian living. So it is argued; and mention is made of abnormal phenomena, such as the communication of thought from one person to another by some means other than the normal organs

of sense; or hypnotism; or the subliminal self. Would not thought-transference help us to understand the power of prayer? Are not men and women saved from a life of sin by hypnotic influence? Does not the conception of the subliminal self enable us to see how God touches the soul and turns us to Himself? To the abnormal in psychology then for a little we may give our attention. But it is no part of our work at present to enter into a full discussion of this obscure subject; our concern is only with the self in so far as it may be influenced by the Christian religion. The subject itself is dealt with in many books that are in the hands of all.[1]

Thought-transference.

In cases of thought-transference,[2] we learn, it is not a thought or an idea that is transferred, but some impression, generally an impression of sadness. It is described as a 'feeling of gloom,' or 'dread,' or 'depression.' The feeling arrests some action, some line of life or of thought; we ask ourselves where

[1] In addition to the larger books by Janet, Bernheim, Bramwell, these may be given: *Hypnotism and Suggestion*, by Bernard Hollander, M.D.; *Abnormal Psychology*, by Isador H. Coriat, M.D.; *L'Être Subconscient*, by Dr. Gustave Geley; *Facultés Cérébrales Méconnues*, by Dr. Sermyn; *La Psychologie Inconnue*, by Emile Boirac.

[2] *Personality and Telepathy*, by F. C. Constable; Boirac as above.

the feeling has come from ; and in the quiet thus produced there emerges a thought corresponding to the feeling. It emerges from the subconscious mind, and will naturally be directed towards some object that would account for the feeling—a relative known to be ill, a distant friend who might meet with an accident, a disaster to some scheme on which the mind is set. Almost every family can tell of some such experience in its history. Again, it may be a scene that is presented to the mind—a face, a person in difficulty, an imploring look as of one in anguish. Such things happen often in life, to all at one time or another, to some more frequently than to others. The vision is immediately translated into an idea, and the idea takes strong hold of the mind. A visit is hurriedly made, and is found to be opportune, or (it may be) inopportune. From experiences of that kind men are making deductions concerning the spiritual world and our relation to it. Suppose, then, it were true that we could thus influence one another, what gain would there be in the religious life ? Our readiness to believe it is due to our desire to make sure of a change in another's life which we could thus accomplish. We have, perhaps, failed to impress them by our reasoning or our

appeal or our own life; we do not see how we can reach them; or we shrink from what is clearly a most difficult task. If our concentrated and intense thought of them could work the change, circumvent the will, overrule the reason, subdue the passions, there would be a simple and easy method of saving our friends. But also we should be saved trouble, we should need no wisdom, nor need we concern ourselves either about earnest prayer to God in their behalf or about our own behaviour in their presence. Even if these were imaginary evils, how is our intense and concentrated thought to produce any result but at the very best the presentation of an impression or a thought which must be rejected or accepted just like other thoughts conveyed by word or letter? The will is overcome only by the awakening of a new desire, and desire is awakened by the presentation of something that wins the heart. As we shall see, God Himself has taken a human method of accomplishing this mighty end of His, and it is not likely that we shall be able to help by any method that is cheaper.

Hypnotism.

We come next to the power of hypnotism in purifying the character. Now, it is generally allowed by experts that the hypnotic patient does not enter into some condition

of mind wholly and entirely foreign to him, and that he is not compelled as by an alien power to do things wholly and entirely different from those he would himself choose if he were awake. All that happens is that his mind has become highly suggestible. Indeed we are all suggestible, but our suggestibility in the normal waking state is weak, being constantly neutralised by our reason, our attention to other things, our judgment of what is most convenient at the moment, and by the fact that our imagination is kept in check by all that surrounds us. All that the operator can do to his patient is to bring about those conditions in which 'sleep' is most easily induced. The sleep itself is suggested by the patient himself; and it is the patient himself that carries the suggestion out. His own mind produces the sleep, and in the sleep his own mind acts. In his actions under hypnotism it is the contents of his own mind that are made manifest; and his own mind accepts the suggestions of the operator or rejects them just as it does in the waking state. But the superior faculties, reflection and will, are in abeyance, and the subconscious mind, with its thoughts, associations, memories, acquired abilities, and capacities, is under the operator's power of suggestion.

Professor Bernheim says :—

'The hypnotic state is not abnormal, nor does it create new fancies or extraordinary phenomena; it develops only what is produced in the state of waking, or exaggerates the normal suggestibility which we all possess in a certain degree; our mental state is modified so as to realise with more vividness and precision the images and impressions evoked.'

Professor Münsterberg puts it thus :—

'It is thus entirely evident that the hypnotic effect results only from the mental condition of the subject. Whatever may stimulate his mind to the right kind of reaction will produce the desired result. The increased suggestibility thus sets in by his own imagination, which may be stirred up by slight visual or tactual or acoustic stimuli, or by monotonous words, or by feelings of relaxation, and especially by words that encourage sleep. But just because it is the play of his own imagination, the most essential factor certainly is the will and expectation of the subject. No one can really be hypnotised against his own will. And to expect strong hypnotic effect from a certain hypnotist is found in itself sufficient to produce hypnotic sleep. Thus there is no special personal power necessary to produce hypnotism. Everybody can hypnotise. And almost with the same sweeping statement it may be said that everybody can be hypnotised, provided that he is willing to enter into this play of

The Mind's own Doing.

imagination. The young child or the insane person is therefore unfit.' [1]

From all this we are entitled to conclude that the subconscious mind is our own mind as we have ourselves built it up ; the notion that the subconscious is something separate if not different from our personality is without evidence even from hypnotism. There is nothing in the subconscious foreign or mysterious, nothing to alarm us unduly, or to fill us with hope of any magical deliverance, nothing to spring upon us as from some dark abyss to overthrow us without or against our will. This magical conception of it is no doubt widespread, but it goes to wreck, so it seems to me, on the one fact established and accepted by all students of the phenomena, that to a hypnotic patient (who is, of course, peculiarly susceptible) you cannot successfully suggest any action that is inconsistent with his or her moral character. The subconscious mind is always in harmony

Never contrary to Character.

[1] *Psychotherapy*, by Hugo Münsterberg, p. 110. There is a school of Psychiatrists who are inclined to believe that there is some real communication from operator to patient. Dr. George Kerr, who most kindly read this chapter, warns me of this. But after all, if something were communicated, it would be something which had to be interpreted by the mind, had to be accepted and assimilated by the mind, that mind that has been built up in consciousness.

with the personality, different, we may admit, from what we *think* we are, but not from what we really are. It is not out of unity with that totality of ours which expresses itself in our common life.[1] Out of the subconscious mind will come nothing darker than we have cultivated by secret desire and imagination, and nothing brighter than we have quietly hoped for, and prayed for, and made an effort to attain. A man is himself and not another, both in his conscious and subconscious life, whether that life be hid in heaven or in hell. In this simple but assured fact we have the key to the tragedies and the glories of human life, to the sudden fall of a good man, and the sudden leap into splendour of a commonplace character. It

[1] Dr. Hollander, while, of course, accepting the remarkable changes that are produced by hypnotism in the mind of the patient, maintains this. The subconscious mind accepts without hesitation or doubt every statement that is made to it. 'He may be thrown into a state of intoxication by being caused to drink a glass of water under the impression that it is brandy; or he may be restored to sobriety by the administration of brandy under the guise of an antidote to drunkenness.' Notwithstanding, Dr. Hollander says: 'I have never found that a subject goes contrary to his natural character.' Criminal suggestions might be accepted by criminal minds, but even in them the subconscious moral nature is generally stronger than the conscious. No hypnotic patient ever betrays a vital secret. *Vide Hypnotism and Suggestion.*

was not by accident that Peter denied his Master, or that when his Master looked at him in silence he went out and wept bitterly.

What we have just said will apply to the strangest of all these phenomena, viz. those of dual or multiple personality.[1] We refer to the case of persons who seem to have within them two or more persons, differing from one another, discussing one another's character, it may be even disliking one another intensely. There are authenticated cases of this kind, and the undisputed fact appears to destroy the whole conception of a personality which we have ourselves built up and for which we can be held responsible. Does not every one feel at times as if there were elements of this manifoldness within him? Is he not overborne by a power that masters him and makes him do things which he really loathes? That we are fearfully and wonderfully made is true. Without trying to flee from the presence of God we can in prayer ascend up into heaven, and in practice make our bed in hell. We can alternate them; we can by custom grow so familiar with them that we see no inconsistency in the alternation. How can we explain this? The beginnings of an explana-

Dual Personality.

[1] Dr. Morton Prince, *Subconscious Phenomena*, p. 71 ff.

tion at least we detect when we recall the equally undoubted fact of the groups and systems of thoughts and feelings of the subconscious mind. We are each of us many 'personalities' in our conscious states.[1] As we have already seen, we are at the same moment workers, politicians, churchmen, members of families, of scientific or literary societies. The system of thoughts belonging to any one of these may be called up and made for the time the only system of which we are conscious. Now, hypnosis can establish the dominance of one system to such an extent that it inhibits every other system, even the possibility of the intrusion of any other. At the word of the operator that system reigns supreme and alone. But at the word of the operator another system may also reign supreme; they may alternate; they may criticise each other. Yet are they but parts of the same large, subconscious mind, for each of them brings into play the same acquired arts, 'which the normal personality acquired normally.' There are certain factors in each of them which are common to them all, and all are but different parts of the experience of the normal personality.

Finally, we come to the consideration of

[1] Professor Jastrow in *Subconscious Phenomena*, p. 41.

'The Subliminal Self.'

that conception of a larger self which is associated with the name of the late Mr. F. W. H. Myers. He describes it as the Subliminal Self, using that term in a sense essentially distinct from what we have hitherto been discussing as the subconscious mind. We have seen how the mind of a man becomes enriched by his daily experiences, receives power and faculty from them, retains them as taste it may be, or wisdom, or skill, or refinement; any one of which he can bring to bear upon problem or poem or picture as the need arises. But the Subliminal Self of Mr. Myers is something altogether different from this. It is a stream of consciousness wholly independent of what we receive through the workaday consciousness, having its own system of mental operations, and building up through its own activities a deeper self of its own. While the subconscious self as we have conceived it is the result of the activities of the conscious, this subliminal self is the source and fountain-head of the conscious, according to Mr. Myers. These are his words [1]:—

'I conceive that no self, of which we can here have cognisance, is in reality more than a fragment of

[1] *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, by F. W. H. Myers, vol. i. p. 15. *Vide* the many discussions of this

a larger Self, revealed in a fashion at once shifting and limited through an organism not so framed as to afford its full manifestation. . . . The conscious self of each of us, as we call it—the empirical, the supraliminal Self, as I should prefer to say—does not comprise the whole of the consciousness or of the faculty within us. There exists a more comprehensive consciousness, a profounder faculty, which for the most part remains potential only as regards the life of earth, but from which the consciousness and the faculty of earth-life are mere selections, and which reasserts itself in its plenitude after the liberating change of death.'

Dr. Sanday's use of it.

This conception has been brought into prominence quite recently through the adoption of it by Dr. Sanday as an aid to the explanation of the Personality of our Lord.[1] His problem was to understand how Christ could live the life of a true man on earth, and yet at the same time be the Eternal Son of God. Christ was one Person, with one will, thinking our thoughts, passing through our

in magazines, more especially that of Professor Stout in the *Hibbert Journal* for October 1903. Haldane's *The Pathway to Reality*, ii. p. 260 f.

[1] The position taken up in *Christologies Ancient and Modern* has been considerably modified in *Personality in Christ and in Ourselves*. For a criticism of Dr. Sanday's view *vide* Principal Iverach's article on Consciousness in Hastings' *Dictionary of Religion and Ethics*, vol. iv., and Professor Mackintosh in *Expository Times* for August and September 1910.

experiences in a thoroughly human way, and yet was divine. Dr. Sanday, anxious to present the problem in a manner that would be enlightening to the mind, seemed to see the possibility of help in the conception of the human personality which had been presented by Mr. Myers. It does seem to be promising if we take these further words of Mr. Myers from another place :—

'It is not really an hypothesis wilder than another if we suppose it possible that that portion of the cosmic energy which operates through the organism of each one of us was in some sense individualised before its descent into generation, and pours the potentiality of larger being into the earthen vessels which it fills and overflows.' [1]

Is there not here an opening for the entrance of the divine not only into the human nature of Christ but of every man of us ? This is precisely the use which Professor James has made of it.

'We have,' he says, 'in the fact that the conscious person is continuous with a wider self through which saving experiences come, a positive content of religious experience which, it seems to me, is literally and objectively true as far as it goes.' [2]

[1] *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. vi. p. 215.
[2] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 515.

We are not now concerned with the doctrine[1] which Dr. Sanday is seeking to establish, but with the conception of the 'self' on which he bases it. As we have seen, it is generally admitted that there is a subconscious element in all our thinking; every thought I ever have comes to me coloured and fashioned by the co-operation of the subconscious. It is not a man's active and conscious thinking alone that determines what his judgment will be; there is a factor in it of which perhaps he is not dreaming. The religious appeal that is made to him at the moment is an appeal to more than is present to his mind at the moment. But this does not imply that there is present another personality.

Is it a Gain?

The desire in the mind of a religious man to establish something of this kind is due to

[1] On the doctrine of the Person of Christ one might say in passing: Let it be granted that there does exist this larger Subliminal Self, and that God has access to it, then (*a*) a Christian would be not more than but exactly the same as complete obedience to the Holy Spirit in his conscious life would make him; (*b*) he would not at any time be able to speak in the name of God and forgive the sins of men, as Christ did; (*c*) a Christian man as he grew in grace would be growing into the consciousness of approach to the Personality of Christ; whereas (*d*) the development of the Christian consciousness is steadily towards the conviction that he is more sinful than he knows, and that any good he ever does is done not in his own power but in the power of another.

his desire to keep the door open for God's reaching a man who is setting himself against the truth. In other words, he is searching for a better and surer way of overcoming sin than the proclamation of Jesus Christ, a more direct way of building up the true life within than the fellowship of Christ. And how may God influence a man within the subliminal unless by presenting thoughts or awakening feelings, or persuading him to action ? Sooner or later the thoughts or feelings would come up into consciousness, and would have to be judged by the conscious self, approved or disapproved by the reason acting consciously. If it is more than a method of suggestion (and of suggestion we shall speak immediately) then it is the communication of ideas of good, feelings towards good, impulses to good—it is faith, hope, and love—and these without the intervention of our own choice. If it is suggestion, there is no gain, seeing we have the same subtle power of suggestion on the conscious mind. There seem to be insuperable difficulties in this conception ; for if the normal self is thus open to inroads from a greater good than our own, it is also open to inroads from a greater evil. Again, if it is open to these unchosen divine compulsions, why is not all the world saved ? If out of

another, larger, and more mysterious self there rise from time to time thoughts and impulses which are not ours, and with which we have nothing to do save that our organism is the *locus* of them, that would seem to do away finally with human responsibility. We should be only the playground of the forces of good and evil; and the playground takes no part in the game.

## THE VALUE OF 'SUGGESTION'

WHAT we have just said brings out very clearly the necessity which men feel of explaining the strange phenomena of the life of the soul, the inroads of what seem to be foreign powers, the unutterable evils to which they are prone, the magnificence of deeds which they attain to. It would appear that the might of the inner man is inexhaustible. Out of the subconscious it comes, whatever we may make the subconscious to be, and it comes on the touch of what is now called 'suggestion.'[1] What, then, is suggestion? Its Definition.

[1] Suggestion is an inseparable part of the subject of the Subconscious, and is discussed in all books dealing with it, especially with Hypnotism. *Vide* Wundt's *Hypnotism und Suggestion*; Sully's *Teacher's Handbook of Psychology*; Münsterberg's *Psychotherapy*, ch. v.; Keatinge's *Suggestion in Education*; Professor Adams' *Exposition and Illustration in Teaching.*

To use a figure of speech, it is the power of tapping the hidden springs of the soul, of reaching the subconscious, and bringing it to bear on some situation that has arisen, some action, or some line of thought. Professor Wundt defines it as 'association accompanied by a narrowing or concentration of consciousness upon the ideas brought up by association, so that antagonistic mental combinations do not come into play'; and although that would not perfectly satisfy all psychologists, or even all the conditions, we can see from it the double tendency of suggestion to call forth some latent power, and to check and arrest completely the mental states that are opposed to it. We have already seen how peculiarly susceptible to suggestion a man is who is hypnotised; and we shall see now how we are all acting under its influence continually. There is hardly an event in the world that does not touch some interest in us more or less closely, not a person we deal with who does not stir some thought or feeling in our mind. The very man against whom we close our hearts has moved us at least deeply enough to close our hearts against him. Thus our inner being is in constant movement, accepting or rejecting approach, yielding at one moment to the influence of

All-pervading.

some suggestion, and turning away from it at another. A pathetic story wins our sympathy, or a stroke of humour, or a little delicate flattery, or a show of science or philosophy. If only the net is not spread in our sight, we all seem an easy catch for the fowler. 'Husband, voter, or pupil, men willingly follow a suggestion whose origin is so well concealed that it seems to be their own.' [1] Indeed there is no breast into which it does not enter in many forms. 'Family life and education, law and business, public life and politics, art and religion are carried on by suggestion.' By suggestion we reach back behind the present mental attitude of the person with whom we are speaking, and touch a previous train of thought or feeling, awaken a 'system' which he is ready to recognise as his own. His own mind is set in operation, and in a direction which is familiar, and with an end in view which he approves. Skill in this is needed, for there is nothing easier than to rouse suspicion or contrariant thoughts; and contrariant thoughts must be avoided at all costs. We must exclude the very possibility of the contrary coming into sight. A gentleman wishing to correct a mistake into which one of

[1] Mitchell's *Structure and Growth of the Mind*, p. 145.

his friends had fallen in writing his address, took a piece of paper and wrote down the wrong number and the right, saying: 'It is not 40 but 50.' The result was that when his friend came to write the address again, both numbers were present in his mental vision, and as 40 had his habit behind it, there seemed no doubt that 40 was right. The gentleman should have written 50 only, and there would consequently have been no suggestion of the error. To direct by negatives is all too frequently to misdirect, because it writes the error more deeply in the mind. To forbid is only a subtle way of suggesting rebellion, as St. Paul found, and many a meaner man since his day.

Value of Calm.

For suggestion to work freely, the mind must as speedily as possible be brought to a state of calm, in which all suspicion and opposition have subsided. It is only in the quiet waters that we can see the pebbles beneath. Mental struggle must have ceased; that laying hold of a view and worrying at it as men so often do, that dogged determination to put the matter right here and now, all that must have ended before the true mind acts.[1] The problem is still there

[1] The power of quiet in transforming a man could hardly be better exemplified than from a strange book written by Joseph

unsolved, we have failed in its solution, and we acknowledge it. In the ensuing quiet, and in the presence of some familiar fact, or with the eye turned to the distant hills, or the sky, or the sea, there suddenly emerges the answer we seek. It is in this manner that many

Barker, *Teachings of Experience.* Mr. Barker was a Methodist preacher of a censorious kind, fell into controversy with his brethren, then into doubt about Christianity, and finally became a pugnacious debater against Christianity. He lost all faith in God. 'The universe was an appalling and inexplicable mystery. And the world was a dreary habitation, and life a weary affair; and there were times when I wished I had never been born. Life had come to be a burden rather than a blessing, and there were seasons when the dark suggestion came to throw it down.' He took a farm in the unpeopled prairie land of Nebraska. Here for the first time for many years his mind was allowed to be at rest; not that his opinions changed, but *his feelings got better*, which rendered a change in his mind possible. So he said. He goes on: 'I was often alone amid the quiet and solemnity of a boundless wilderness. The busy world of men was far away. There was no one near to foster doubt or unbelief, to open or irritate afresh the closing wounds inflicted by bigotry and intolerance in days gone by. And the loneliness of my condition seemed to bring me nearer to God. It allowed the revival of those Godward-tending instincts implanted in man's heart by the hand of the Creator. It allowed the better self to rise and assert its power, while it shamed the evil self into the shade. And often when far beyond the sight of man or of human habitation, amidst the eternal silence of the boundless solitude, I had strange thoughts and strange feelings; and there were times when if I had yielded to the impulses from within, I should have cast myself down upon the ground, and adored the Great Mysterious Infinite' (p. 107).

inventions are made. Sir W. Rowan Hamilton writes :—

'To-morrow will be the fifteenth birthday of the Quaternions. They started into life or light, full-grown, on the 16th of October 1843, as I was walking with Lady Hamilton to Dublin, and came up to Brougham Bridge. That is to say, I then and there felt the galvanic circuit of thought *close*. I pulled out on the spot a pocket-book which still exists, and made an entry, on which at the very moment I felt that it might be worth my while to expend the labour of at least ten (or it might be fifteen) years to come. But then it is fair to say that this was because I felt a *problem* to have been at that moment *solved*—an intellectual want relieved—which had *haunted* me for at least fifteen years before.' [1]

Both the long-continued haunting and the quiet are needed before the subconscious mind will speak. Through many a weary day the prophet Jeremiah tried to comprehend the meaning of Jehovah's dealings with His people Israel. Why should His chosen be thus ruthlessly trampled under the feet of the heathen, and the city laid waste? Then came the quiet of the potter's workshop, where he watched the potter at work as

[1] This is quoted from Carpenter's *Mental Physiology*, p. 537, where other illustrations are given.

he had often done when he was a boy. Then suddenly the light came. The potter makes of the clay what the clay is fit to be made. 'The vessel that he meant at first to make was marred; so he made it again another vessel as seemed good to the potter to make it.' There was the revelation, and the relief of the prophet's mind.

This summoning of the old life, this appeal to all that is deepest and best in a man, is accomplished frequently by a sudden question[1] that goes to the heart, or the sudden emergence of a serious commonplace truth like death, in the midst of a careless life. We see also how massive truths[2] will hold vast assemblies of men, truths like the uncertainty of human affairs, the inheritance of sin's penalties, judgment, eternity, God. These and such as these pull a man together, and it may be send him out on a new path of life with a swing. Open up the future to him with promise and hope, show him the possibility of achieving something that is

Massive Truths.

[1] This is the familiar and often effective method of the revival preacher. But, of course, the mind quickly acquires the instinct of protecting itself even from this attack.

[2] Young preachers are afraid, they say, of great texts, forgetting that it is a religious truth and not their handling of it that impresses the mind. The most brilliant handling (in the world of religious thought) of a trifle is only trifling.

worthy, show it especially in the lives of men just like himself, and the mere statement lifts him out of the narrows of his present position and awakens within him new energy, because it throws new light upon his own nature and the nature of the world.

There we see the power of suggestion. For as soon as we call forth a 'system' of the subconscious mind we inhibit the opposing system or systems; everything contrariant disappears from the consciousness; our attention is fixed, and it may be transfixed, on the thought that has been summoned up, and it will pass on speedily to action. And this will infallibly happen, because the suggested thought or action comes to the man as his own ripe thought, seeming not only right but inevitable, and demanding with all the weight of an imperative that action be taken. It is in very truth the man himself, the man of past experience judging the present occasion, and in it seeking to realise himself. He would probably have resisted any external force however subtle, any apparent attempt to carry him by argument; but this is from within, and he accepts it as his own. Thus suggestion is the bringing into action of one part of a man to master another, the better part (let us say) to overthrow the alien.

And if that subconscious mind has been fed through long years, stimulated and strengthened by constant emergence, it may at a touch spring up in what will appear terrific force. This is what makes a man speak of an external power acting on him, of being compelled to act against his better judgment. He feels he is being *driven* along by a power other than himself. Against his best resolutions, notwithstanding his attempts to flee from his temptation, in spite of prayer, he sins. He is driven—driven by the devil of drink or greed or envy or passion or hate. He perhaps commits a diabolical iniquity which in the very doing he abhors. But on deeper reflection these actions are seen to spring from within him, having a source unseen and unsuspected, but yet his own. It is possible by means of torture to drive the most patient mad; gentle women can be starved into fury, or by the sight of their famishing children made to forget their womanhood. All the rich fruits of civilisation and of Christian training and conviction can be for a time submerged through the rise of some fear, vague and looming-large and threatening. The mind may be so fascinated by a fear that the whole universe of honour and affection is excluded. Yet all of these

'Devil-driven.'

things are there, within. The soul of a Ridley quails, oscillates, but in the end recovers and faces death without a quiver. The first appeal was to the instinctive shrinking from the pain of fire, the next to the true Personality that rested and stayed on God. From the moment God rose within him fear ceased to exist. In the same way the subconscious is the fountain-head of those instantaneous flashes into glory of apparently commonplace people. Pushing aside commonsense, and thoughts of utility, and the reasonings that tell on cool-headed observers, they rush to the rescue: a woman leaps to death from a moving train in order to save her child, who has fallen from the window; a soldier hurries back within the enemy's range to save a wounded comrade; a miner volunteers to seek for other miners shut up in a burning pit. They fail perhaps; and yet not wholly, for the world is richer for their deeds, and every one who reads or hears of them has by suggestion of the bravery latent in men been himself made braver.

God-inspired.

From the point of view of the forming and confirming of character and the saving of men's souls we can see how important a part suggestion plays. It is the calling forth and vitalising of the system of good within the

Danger in Attack.

subconscious, and the consequent and inevitable cutting off the system of evil that perhaps is dominating the will. It is attention to good that inhibits evil, attention to God that inhibits sin. Yet with fatal perversity men tend to turn the attention of the sinner on the evil of his life ; they speak of it, refer to it, cast it up as a reproach, thus bringing it back to memory again. They call it a weed which they say must be plucked up, or a upas tree which they say must be cut down. But evil is neither a weed nor a tree, but a thought, a disposition in possession of the field of consciousness on which the attention is fixed. By our attack we have been suggesting evil and not good, directing the attention yet more fixedly on evil and not good, forgetting that when evil is strong enough to require attack it is also strong enough to emerge into consciousness on the least suggestion, and thereafter hold the field. The method of our Lord, on the other hand, seems to have been to fix the attention on the good, to turn the mind on God, to give hope, to assure men that all things were possible for them in the world of the spirit. His unwearying appeal to this latent good in man developed it. It was there by the original gift of God, to be believed in, spoken

The Method of Christ.

to, relied on; when weak to be encouraged, when invisible to be imputed. He appealed to all that was manly in Peter when He called that impulsive disciple a rock. He who could have put His finger on the defects of Nathanael called him an Israelite without guile. To the woman of Samaria, hardened by a life of self-pleasing, He spoke with such delicacy and tenderness that the true woman-soul awoke within her until, forgetting her water-pot, she ran to tell others of a Saviour. The suggestion to a sinful man that there lies at his disposal also a power to accomplish the morally impossible brings the impossible within his reach. In the words of Professor Caird: 'The inmost secret of each man's heart is the secret of the whole world, and if only we go deep enough we can evoke an echo in every breast.'

Power of Personality.

The deepest reach that is ever made into the subconscious, and certainly the safest and surest method of suggestion, is that which is made by the presence of a gracious Christian Personality. The strongest intellectual argument is doubled in force by the high consistent character of a man who urges it. We trust not only his logic, but him. For we can see that he has no ends of his own to serve; and that in moral and religious matters he has

seen more clearly and acted more surely than we have ever done. When he is present doubts die away and certainty increases; the unseen world is nearer, and spiritual powers are active. His conviction somehow convinces us, rendering us in a subtle way ready to become his disciples. In some such manner as this Christ Himself also may have gathered men about Him.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ENSLAVING OF THE SOUL THROUGH SIN

THE development of a Christian personality would be simple but for the presence of a power which sometimes seems to be mightier and subtler than Christianity itself, viz. Sin. But sin renders the life even of a Christian hard, bitter, and it may be tragic. As we learned in our childhood, it starts with the history of our race, it runs through all ages and lands, mars the peace of every soul, trips up the careless, mocks at the endeavours of the strong after reformation, cripples the noblest worker, and stains the devotion of the saint. Christian men of all ranks and degrees have confessed it; Christian literature has been fashioned by it into its tenderest and loftiest cadences, as men mourn over their defeats or rejoice over their victories.

But just at this moment there is a tendency to belittle the sense of sin both in the direction of our repentance and of our mastery

over it. Those who experience it keenly are said to be morbid, neurotic, sick; all that is necessary for escape is said to be to ignore it; when a man falls he should, without troubling about the cause of the fall, rise and press on again; he need not reflect on the nature of man himself as the abiding source and origin of the fall. For once, a scientific man is content to accept a fact without seeking for its explanation.

But the Christian consciousness cannot rest satisfied with that. Sin is not a fact that comes to us from without; it is not an experience that accidently befalls some men; it is their own act, their own choice in the face of an alternative choice which they know they might have made. And the deed they have done is an offence against One who has favoured and benefited them at every turn in life. It is not easy to see how regret, and deep regret, over a wrong done to a friend should be called morbid. The pointsman is not morbid who most bitterly regrets the blunder that has brought a dozen lives to an untimely end. Sin is called morbid only because this personal aspect of it is forgotten. It is thought of as a mistake or a misfortune, and is classed with other evils of life to which we are born, like a headache or losing a purse.

And the mind in discussing it slips easily from the thought of one kind of evil to the thought of another [1]; from misfortune to sin, and from sin to misfortune again, until a healthy-minded revolt against brooding and whining over a slight loss passes into a false revolt against the bitter tears of repentance. They are both of them alike (we are told)—the spilt milk of daily life over which we should be children if we wept.

### THE BIAS TO SIN AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

BUT the Christian is not troubled merely about the sinful act but also about the sinfulness of his heart; not so much about the deed done as about the state of mind, the nature, the condition of soul that made it possible for him to do the deed. The deed is a revelation to him of what he himself is; it is the symptom of a disease, and the disease is an alienation, an enmity against a friend, a benefactor, a deliverer. Now to see this, to realise it, to mourn over it is not due to low spirits, or to a morbid condition of mind, or to disorder of nerves. It is the clear perception of the fact that he has

[1] Even Professor James is not free from this fault in his treatment of sin. *Vide* his chapter on the Sick Soul, *passim*.

been guilty of an unworthy action, that it is *in* him so to act, and that he did it notwithstanding his clear knowledge of its baseness. It is true, this knowledge comes to a man in all its clearness only after he has become a Christian and not before; only when he has risen out of the dominion of sin does he perceive how debasing the sin was.[1] He knows his sin, so far as he can know it, only by looking at it in the light which Christ sheds. It is pardon of sin that reveals sin; it is truth that makes error clear, and the enlightening of the mind that makes us feel the darkness in which we lived. No doubt what has led some writers to call a man like Bunyan morbid, when he blames himself so bitterly, is that a good and godly man should bewail him over actions that were not sins at

Sin known only through Christ.

[1] A sense of defect is possible only to the man who has some standard of right conduct. If a man is ever to condemn himself, it must be by seeing clearly that he has missed the mark, and that he could have hit it if he had wished. Whether in seeking to deliver a man from his sin we should chiefly insist upon his guilt will sometimes be a difficult question to decide; but certainly our tendency is always to attack and not to encourage. It is as certain that it is the perception of the life that might have been ours and is not that fills us with regret. Byron said in one of his letters: 'What fills me with despair is not the thought of what I am but the thought of what I might have been.' A sense of sin comes most naturally from a perception of what Christ is and would most readily have made us.

all.[1] But they misunderstand him. While they are thinking only of bell-ringing he was thinking of its associations and the state of his own mind that made it possible for him to find his pleasure there while the fellowship of God was in his offer. So long as a man remains outside the Christian faith he is indifferent to the condition of his soul; no sooner does he enter than he marvels at his former indifference.

The development of this side of our nature within our consciousness we shall now attempt to trace. It takes its start from the natural instincts and individuality of the child and his endeavour to realise himself to the full; that which is his true self is seeking expression. He feels, 'My life is true life; my opinion and my way are right.' This is not sin; it is the push of nature, the necessary condition of all thinking and acting, whether of the child or the man, if they are to attain their best. This desire for doing is nature's method of teaching; it is only by thinking for ourselves that we learn to think;

Desire for Self-expression.

[1] *E.g.* Professor Royce in his *Studies of Good and Evil* is hardly fair to Bunyan in the way in which he treats his sense of sin. After all he was only trying to master his sin by beating it down, a plan which most men try at one time or another. But he came to the better method at last, and found rest.

by acting for ourselves that we learn to act aright. In all this the child is neither good nor bad, although he is from the very first capable of becoming either. When he says, 'Let me do it; listen to me,' he is doubtless being driven, but not yet devil-driven. To be devil-driven, alas! may come to be his lot in life, with all its infinite tragedy, but it will come to him only by his own choice.

The appeal of the world is in the first place to the senses, and the child responds to what is pleasing, to what nourishes and flatters the self; he resents whatever pains him or restricts the free movement of his impulse. We can very quickly detect in the child the bias towards anything that makes for self. We see the set of the soul towards what we call selfishness, the unwillingness to consider any way but this. There is besides a certain perversity or crookedness in human nature which comes rapidly into view, a perversity that resists for the sake of resisting.[1] But to the child and to the adult alike the choice is always a choice of what appeals to them

Perversity of Will.

[1] The Scots have a word for this disposition which to them is much more expressive than any English word, viz. *thrawnness*. It is familiar at any age, but is very frequent in the young, and is a mood in which they simply will take neither one way nor another, refusing to be influenced at all by anything, reasonable or unreasonable, that comes to them from without.

as 'a good,' a something which promises satisfaction, by which they conceive they will enter into a fuller life. It is the assertion of one inner self against another, the baser against the nobler, or the narrow against the universal; or in St. Paul's language, 'the flesh against the spirit.' Every day a thousand impressions have been stamped upon the mind; a thousand suggestions, a thousand offers have been made. These have come to him at home, in the street, at work, in conversation, in the treatment he has received, in rewards and rebukes, in kindness and cruelty—all which have awakened impulses of good or ill, of love or resentment, of secrecy or deceit, of envy or greed. And every assertion of the self has strengthened the innate bias towards it, tinged the thinking more deeply with its love.

Now, over the margin of consciousness these impressions and thoughts and impulses have gone into the subconscious, where they have mingled with former thoughts of the same kind, and with thoughts also of good that have been experienced in the past—a witch's cauldron out of which anything may come—at first without any centre or principle to organise them. But some day they are organised suddenly (if for sin) by the sight of

a sinful deed done, or the proposal of a sin by one who has been trusted, or by something that has been read in a book or paper, or (still more powerful) by the committing of some actual sin. Curiosity concerning sin has thus been awakened, or experience of sin has come to them; and now many things that puzzled them in the past—words, remarks, movements—have at once become luminous, and the soul knows evil. It is this fact that makes the question of environment so important, and that renders poverty in a city so much more deadly than poverty in a highland glen. But in the best homes also a chance impression—the careless talk of a visitor, a casual glance at a bad book, a veiled reference to some iniquity—may crystallise the fluid impressions of years into evil thinking. From that moment there is set up within our hearts a system of evil which will henceforth readily answer to every suggestion of evil that comes from without. To evil we will now most probably give attention. If it should be said there is no reason why we must attend to evil, seeing that good also is within us, the answer is we have a bias to evil. Call it by what name we will, explain it how we may, the fact remains, evil sticks to us when good is forgotten; evil

The Sense of Sin.

rises more readily to suggestion than good; our impulses to resentment and self-assertion are swifter in action than impulses to kindness and forbearance. The heart seems to bring forth evil fruit from its very soil. Of course, it is only through suggestion that this takes place, and there must be an occasion for it. Evil communications corrupt us only because they are the occasion of our own heart's corrupt action, and evil books harm us only through their power of awakening our own imagination and desires of evil.

### THE THEORY OF ATTENTION IN THE HISTORY OF A SIN

WE see then that a sinful personality is built up through the constant repetition of sinful acts and the direction of the attention to sinful ends. We have a sinful nature; but a sinful act is either the result of a deliberate choice or the instinctive act of a nature that has been built up of many previous choices. It is in no case the result of custom, or the following of public opinion, or obedience to any external compulsion. It is a choice of evil because we like it, and in presence of an alternative of good which we like less. Now, the choice between good

and evil is possible only through some degree of moral insight. The will must act on some perception, and yet not immediately on the mere perception, for there always intervenes a desire for the end, a liking to do it, a love for the thing conceived as done. According to Green of Balliol, the history of any act is this : 'There is (*a*) a perception of an object or an end ; (*b*) a thought of it as a possible good ; (*c*) a thought of oneself realising the good ; (*d*) the dwelling on that thought ; (*e*) the consequent desire of it ; (*f*) the act itself.' Or to put it in a form familiar to us all : 'And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat.' Whoever wrote that knew pretty much all that is to be known of the history of sin. Thomas à Kempis tells the same tale : 'At the first there comes to the mind simply a thought, then strong imagination, after that a feeling of pleasure, then an evil motion, then consent ; and so by degrees the malignant enemy gains full possession.' [1] *Mutatis mutandis* that is also the history of the most saintly act. Of course, it is not every thought that either ends in crime or glory. The

The History of an Act.

[1] *The Imitation of Christ*, I. xiii.

thought of the moon, however persistently dwelt on, will not, in an ordinarily healthy mind, produce any result worth recording unless it be an astronomer's. But within the range of formative thoughts, it is true, the thought of pleasure will, or the thought of gain, or of torture. The thought vividly presented to the mind has the power of setting up a life of its own, as it were; or to put it better, the mind takes hold of it, turns it round, dwells upon it, builds up castles of its own around it, fills it with glory for the present, and runs it out into glory for the future. It is in that way that occasion for good or evil bursts upon the world and, it may be, amazes the dreamer.[1]

Whether the thought will rise to a desire will depend upon the subconscious life, upon the system of desires established there. We generally say it will depend upon the character, but that is to say the same thing, for one's character is only one's system of desires. Not only are Green's steps the actual steps by which thought passes into action, but they

[1] Cf. Tito Melema in George Eliot's *Romola*. The secret imaginations and conversations, which we all indulge in thoughtlessly, are most fruitful causes of sin. The outbursts of angry words or passionate actions are often nothing more than the expression of these speeches, which have gathered in power and carried us farther than we ever meant to go.

have a tendency to realise themselves. There is a quasi-causal connection among them, and this connection is of the highest importance if we would understand either temptation or the way of escape from it. That brings us to the consideration of the meaning of attention.

In every ordinary act of attention the field of consciousness, as we have seen, consists of a centre and a margin. When a man is reading aloud he sees not only the word he is uttering, but he sees also, in the common phrase, with ' the tail of his eye,' the word he has last uttered and the word he will utter next. There is the centre in full light and the margin that is more or less dim. He has, so to speak, a panorama continually passing before him, emerging from the obscure, and passing over the margin into the obscure again. But the centre is never absolutely fixed in ordinary vision, even when we are looking at a fixed point. There is an oscillating movement continually going on around the centre or from the centre to the margin, which then immediately becomes the centre, the old centre retreating to the margin. Now, the secret of all highly cultivated life is the power of concentrating the attention. Professor Münsterberg goes so far as to say

that the only formal result that any one derives from education is this power of directing the attention.[1] But even then we attend by moving round the centre within a narrow limit. Serious thought is the bringing of many similitudes to bear upon a settled idea, or the moving in a firm sequence through many ideas to an end clearly perceived or sought for. But out of the untrained mind, and

[1] His whole article on the Fear of Nerves in *Problems of To-Day* is suggestive reading. *Vide* also *Psychotherapy*: 'A go-as-you-please method characterises our whole society from the kindergarten to the height of life. We eulogise the principle of following the paths of our true interest, and mean by that too often the paths of least resistance. Study becomes play, the child learns a hundred things, but does not learn the most important one—to do his duty, and to do it accurately and with submission to a general purpose. The power of attention thus never becomes trained, the energy to concentrate on that which is not interesting by its own appeal is slowly lost, a flabby superficiality must set in which is moved by nothing but the personal advantage and the zig-zag impulses of the chance surroundings. He who has never learned obedience can never become his own master, and whoever is not his own master through all his life lacks the mental soundness and mental balance which a harmonious life demands. Flippancy and carelessness, haphazard interests and recklessness must result, mediocrity wins the day, cheap aims pervade the social life, hasty judgments, superficial emotions, trivial problems, sensational excitements, and vulgar pleasures appeal to the masses. Yellow papers and vaudeville shows—vaudeville shows on the stage, in the court-room, on the political platform, in the pulpit of the church—are welcome, and of all the results one is the most immediate, the disorganisation of the brain energies' (p. 200 f.).

also out of the trained mind when dreaming—that is, out of the subconscious—connections arise. A man's thinking, however, is never at any time unrestricted rambling, but rambling within the limits of his interests. Nor are his imaginings free creations of his mind, but are fixed and determined by his experiences, his purposes, and desires. Beyond the boundaries of his experience he cannot go. The world that is open to him at any moment is the world that he has built up for himself by innumerable acts of choice, innumerable dreamings and actions.

Upon the inner life there is coming from without a continual stream of influences which divert attention and may permanently deflect it. As is familiar to every one, there are two kinds of attention—voluntary and involuntary. What is called involuntary is that which is forced upon us from without; for example, the sudden firing of a gun, or a conflagration, or a collision, or a fright, or a great gift. In this we cannot help ourselves, the event compels attention and fixes it. Something new, sudden, unexpected will produce an effect of exultation or revulsion that may last for months or for a lifetime. Many souls have been permanently biassed for good or evil through such an event. Good news

Attention.

may come in this way; and so, too, sin may come in the form of shock, and may be lodged like a foreign body within the consciousness to its abiding pain or its undoing.

But the other form of attention, called voluntary, is that in which we ourselves direct it on an object. The object, for example, is not in itself interesting to us, but we see the utility of it, or are led to value it through the advice of one we can trust, or through the example of one we admire, or we wish to see what is in it, or to prove that it is worthless.[1] The point is, we can direct our attention to it, apart altogether from its own attractiveness. But by our doing so it tends to become attractive. If there is anything in us at all akin to this object, anything in our mental build or our past history, or in our subconscious mind, there is a tendency for the uninteresting to become interesting by attention. It branches off into connection with other thoughts in our minds, finds points of contact with other experiences, acts (it may be) as a key to things that lay unexplained, or touches old feelings of interest within us. We now like it because it agrees with other conclusions which we have formed, or we

[1] *Vide* an admirable chapter in Mitchell's *Structure and Growth of Mind*, viii.

dislike it because it is opposed to a position we have taken up in public and fear to see overthrown. We accordingly direct our attention to it. An anarchist studies chemistry for the purpose of making bombs, and is so caught by chemistry that he makes it his life's work. We study an unattractive subject for the sake of a prize, and (possibly) take an interest thereafter in the subject. We have the power then of directing the attention. Let us apply this to the question of sin which we are at present considering.

### TEMPTATION AS A QUESTION OF ATTENTION

A TEMPTATION is the presentation of an evil to our minds in some form that appeals to us. Before it can appeal to us it must come with the appearance of a 'good'; not moral good, but still a good that promises to satisfy some of our wants. In the opening stages of the temptation there is also presented to the mind the moral alternative. The two come together, the apparent good and the real good; the selfish good and the universal good. Our consciousness will contain both at the same moment, the one in the centre, the other in the margin. For a little there will be a competition between

Tempted only by a 'good.'

them to determine which will prevail; they alternate; the sin at one moment holding the centre while virtue is on the margin, at another moment virtue holding the centre and sin passing to the margin. There is oscillation. In the earlier stage we have the ability to choose which will prevail. We do not throw our weight into either scale; we only look, we only fix the attention, and attention turns the scale. For if we fix it, say, on virtue even for a little, what happens? Out of the subconscious arise associations to aid it—memories, ideas, illustrations, emotions gather round it—the evil passes to the margin, loses colour and vitality and the power of appeal. It is dead, and the attention concentrated on virtue rapidly becomes a virtuous action. If, however, on the other hand, we look at the evil, fixing our attention on it for a moment, our imagination begins to play on it; we see ourselves realising and enjoying the good it promises. From the subconscious rise up perhaps the faces of old companions who had been with us in a like sin before. We are in the old scene again; the old desire is on us; and swift as was the choice itself the old deed is done. During the short period of oscillation we may feel unrest or disharmony within the

The Struggle.

soul. The coming of the alternatives to the centre or their passing to the margin is wholly due to acts of attention, the rapid alternation of them producing a kind of agitation ; but when the attention has settled on the evil the *dénouement* is rapid, and the end is reached and is satisfying for a time. In the later stage of the temptation the only possible hope of escape from actual sinning must come to us from without—a sudden movement that calls off the attention or something that startles us in the very approach to the act. The modern classic illustration of this is in Browning's *Pippa Passes* ; the Scriptural, in the silent look of Jesus on faithless Peter. But in ordinary circumstances the sin takes possession of the whole field of consciousness, and we hurry to the deed.

Now, is there anything that determines while we are being tempted whether our attention shall be turned to the good or to the evil ? [1] In other words, is there anything that determines on which side the stronger rally will be made from the subconscious, on which side the hidden associations, memories, emotions will act most rapidly and most powerfully ? The psychological answer is, in

Which will prevail ?

[1] For still further discussion of this see chh. v. and vii. below.

ordinary circumstances the rally is always on the side that has received most attention in the past. It is a question of the strength of the 'system' in the subconscious, or the facility with which it emerges, and these are largely determined by the use we make of our hours of leisure. When an act of sin has been committed there is reaction, a time of calm reflection, in which we see ourselves as we could not in the hour of passion. The moral alternative has now its chance, and we can fortify ourselves for the next assault. We condemn ourselves, and rising out of our past deed lay hold of our strength. This we do by repentance, resolution, reading; or we change our circumstances, leaving bad associates, or a dangerous situation, or a town. Many men have learned that half an hour's quiet meditation every morning in the company of a good book will dispel the possibility of temptation for hours, as a lightning-rod prevents the thunderbolt. Thus we feed the secret springs of the soul. But without this reflection—this turning back upon ourselves, and putting the baser life away—the heart is only hardened by sin, and we are after it the readier for it again. The secret springs we feed are of evil.

But once more we ask (*trying to go deeper*

*psychologically*) : Is there anything that determines which of the sources we shall go to in our hours of leisure for supplies to the springs of our hidden life ? This brings us face to face with the subtle pervading influence of the community, the society in which we have lived. If that community has been worldly, frankly evil, there will be no spiritual power playing on our moral nature and developing it, no appeal to it, no presentation to it of an ideal, no opportunity therefore of choosing the best ; the possibility of that choice occurs only in a community of spiritual men. And yet it is not altogether the community that determines the choice. In every person, as we have seen, there is a personal element by which he makes his own choice, a personal element that is unique, special, separate from all others. This is what we call his freedom, which is not merely a freedom to make the petty choices of the moment, *e.g.* which street he will take at a crossing, or which book he will lift first from a table, but which side he will take in a time of social revolution, or of moral controversy, or of licence.

Power of the Community.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF SIN INTO SLAVERY

BUT let us follow the development of the sin into slavery. We are supposing that the soul has accepted the evil alternative, and that the evil deed is done. Now, it was done in a certain place, at a certain time, probably in the presence of some companion; in short, it has its associations, which are many. And when the sinner passes the place again or meets again his companion, or when any one of the many associations recur, the thought of the sin immediately rises to his mind. Every association is a path by which a suggestion of the old deed reaches the heart. It reaches the heart in a flash, and in a flash the picture of the sin returns in all its details. He is in imagination living it over again—that in itself may become a new temptation; it will at least revive something of the old desire. In his next temptation the force of evil will be stronger and its path easier. A competition with the moral alternative there will still be, but the sin will more quickly gain possession of the whole field of consciousness. This second transgression in its turn has its own associations of time, place, manner, and companions, and each of them in turn has its own innumerable associations.

A Network of Evil.

The name of the place will occur in conversation, we meet it in our reading, it crops up in business, a friend makes his home there, and so on. In many ways it is presented to our minds, and each time it is presented the thought of our sin returns, for an instant only, it may be, but it returns; and this constant repetition fixes the sin in our souls and makes recurrence of the temptation certain and the sin almost inevitable. Thus the associations of sin multiply as we go on sinning, and get connected and intertwined with one another, forming by and by a complicated network of morbid, sinful suggestions, until our besetting sin springs upon us from every point of the compass, and God's glorious universe becomes a hideous mass of putrefying corruption.

If we are to understand the nature of a soul's deliverance from sin, we must understand the nature of its bondage. The histories of all evil passions are in their main outlines the same. Avarice and pride, which are purely spiritual, do not differ much from the drug crave. But the most familiar, and therefore the easiest to follow, is the love of alcohol, and concerning that accordingly you will permit me to quote a few extracts from a MS. autobiography in my possession. It is the case of a young woman who was brought

The History of a Crave.

up in a respectable and well-to-do home, where, however, alcohol, according to the custom of the town, was used freely. She suffered from a nervous trouble in girlhood for which the doctor had prescribed a little whisky. She took it also, like other young ladies, in social gatherings, in visiting, and when she married gave it to her visitors, taking it also herself along with them. She began to like it and to think of it. I shall pass over the terrible details of the ruin of the home and confine myself as far as possible to the history of the *desire*. For example, although exceedingly fond of her children, she sent out her boy, six years of age, one snowy night when his father was at home, with directions to take off his boots in the street, pawn them, buy whisky with the money, hide the bottle in a cellar, and slip into bed without his father knowing.

'I have stripped the baby of his night-gown, wrapped him in an old shawl or any rag, laid him down, and run to pawn the gown for 4d. that I might get drink. . . . I looked in pity on my children, but could not stop drinking. It was my first thought in the morning, my last at night; I began to rise in the middle of the night whenever I wakened, and take it if there was any in the house. If there was none I was in perfect misery, and

thought the morning would never wear away until the shops were open at 6 A.M.' (It was in England.) 'So strong did the passion become that I have been standing at the door of the public-house at that hour with my bottle and my money—1s., or sometimes only 1½d. When going home with it the one thought seemed to be and was, Where can I, or how can I, get more when this is done? Every article I could get a penny on was pawned; and when I saw my children crying with hunger, and not a bit of bread to give them or a penny to buy it, the agony of my heart was fearful. Yet so blind was I to my own sin and wickedness I did not blame myself but my husband. . . . The day after Christmas, when a woman came to the door selling fish, I took her in, and for threepence gave her all the little things that had been sent to the children in presents. Yet, after all that, I will still maintain I was sorry for the children.' (After a prolonged abstinence through her stay in the hospital she felt the desire for drink as fresh as ever.) 'The first time I went for drink after coming home I fancied I heard some one say to me: "Take this and it will drive you worse than you were before." I knew if once I tasted it I would never be able to stop it. Still, I could not help myself. I had no power. I walked in, thinking the Lord would help me not to take too much.' (She had kept up the habit of prayer, *repeating* the prayer she had learned in her childhood.) 'Many times I would pray, asking the Lord to put it into the pawnbroker's heart to take

whatever I was pawning—sometimes it would be the last article of clothing on my children's bodies, worth so little that I was afraid they would not take it in a pawnshop—then I would pray. . . . I tried to get my mind set on my little home, such as it was, one part of me saying: "Go on; if you like you can make this place look comfortable"; then, oh! that craving, saying: "Take a little whisky, just a little, before you start, and you will go on so much better." There I was struggling between two desires, one trying to do well, and the other, oh! so evil, and well I knew it.' (She concluded to take 'the little' to help her to make the place tidy and pleasing. But to get it she must pawn something, and as there was but little left to pawn, she took the sheets.) 'I remember, as if it had been to-day, when going down that road I was fighting with my conscience. "Go back," it would say; "you will again come to ruin, and bring your husband and children to it, and break your old mother's heart." When I hesitated for a moment the other voice would say: "Only this once, and you will get the money some way to get them back." Drink was my first thought in the morning; it was with me all the day; not an article could I do or plan to do but the thought of drink was first.' This is, as it were, the refrain of this tragedy: 'I could not stop it'; 'I would *have* to get drink.' 'Drink, drink, drink was never night or day out of my mind.' [1]

[1] This might have been illustrated from the crave for money, as Balzac has done in *Eugénie Grandet*; or in the case of consuming ambition, as Milton has done in *Paradise Lost*, i.

That was a case of slavery to sin, the slave being entirely incapable of escape by any force within her. Wishing at this stage to avoid any of the entanglements that gather round the expression 'slavery of the will,' I have described it as slavery of the attention, as a fascination and transfixing of the attention such as might befall any one who witnessed a fearful crime or was paralysed by a great fear. To describe the slavery in terms of attention is besides more helpful in understanding both the slavery and the deliverance from it. Now, it is the fixing of the mind on any object that completely excludes every other object—inhibits it, as they say. But we are held by something vastly stronger than any object; we are held by our own past lives. Every deed done in accordance with our bias adds to the weight of the bias. There is in each of us what Renouvier calls a 'Personal Solidarity,' so that the sum of our earlier days, with their whole content of thoughts, emotions, and deeds, carries us into a course of conduct to-day, which is indeed the expression of our soul to-day, but is also the result of all our past. The sinner is not free to-day in the sense that every line of behaviour is equally open to him. He has a history, and the history has given a momen-

'Personal Solidarity.'

tum to his disposition which may sweep him past fine thoughts and fine feelings and wishes into his sin again. This inability grows with the years, and each act of surrender makes the next surrender more certain, while at the same time it makes it less possible for the very thought of the moral alternative to appear. Sin is a punishment of sin, and moral blindness the punishment of choosing the dark. Sin will now seem to be the only *reasonable* course, and morality a mere pretence or a weakness. How degraded the condition of a man or woman may become we all know. The reason is dethroned, and there reigns over the whole inner, and it may be also over the whole outer life, passion and the beast. That liberty which is man's most glorious privilege is changed into the instrument of his ruin. The soul that might reach to the sonship of the Eternal 'abdicates its rights, forgets its duties, and the animal rules the whole life of the man. Then the nervous energy is soon exhausted; and the reason, overthrown and outraged in what is its prerogative, may depart without possibility of return.'

### THE SLAVERY IS A SLAVERY OF THE MIND

THE question now arises whether this depraved state, this slavery to a sin, is a disease of the organism. That the abuse of the body produces disease of the body is, of course, self-evident. But our question is whether the desire is a bodily disease or the result of disease. A famous physician has said that dipsomania can be cured only by religiomania. In my opinion neither drunkenness nor religion is a mania at all. The body and the mind are, as we know, inseparably united and affect each other. But we do not say on that account that thought is the result of a bodily movement. And no more can we say that a great desire, even a degrading desire, is the result of a bodily condition. Desire is mental and mental only. It has an object, an end in view, and finds its satisfaction only when the end is reached. And thus a desire, such as the fierce craving for alcohol, is still a desire, although it may be true that it can be cured only by a force as potent as its own, viz. religion. Let us look at this. In partaking of alcohol there is a sensation of exhilaration, or perhaps a sense of relief from depression or from pain, a forgetfulness of some worry

or a fine indifference to it; and the thought of this relief may pass into a desire to experience the relief again. But the physical discomfort can be escaped, and the physical relief can be attained in other ways that are known and open and as easily accessible. There is no thought of them, however, or of attempting an escape by their means. The association has been formed with the drug, and therefore the thought of the drug is presented again with the presentation of the trouble. The patient thinks of it, attends to it, believes in it, puts more and more trust in it, until he comes to rely on it for a hundred things. He seeks it in joy and in sorrow; it is associated with a birth, a marriage, a death. He appeals to it when he has heavy work to do or none, when he has no food or plenty. After a time it is the one thing that occurs as a remedy for anything, the only haven to which he imagines he can flee. He flees to it so frequently that the suggestion is always on the threshold of consciousness, and at every touch sweeps to the centre. Through incessant repetition it is strong enough to hold the field against any competition. The only possibility of thwarting it is through some other strong interests. But these do not exist, none at least strong

A Crave is Mental.

enough to be compared with the crave. The attention is riveted, transfixed, as powerfully as it would be by a sudden and vast danger, or by the burning of his home with his children in it, or by a crushing sorrow. We describe the man as 'possessed' by it; we call it an 'obsession.' But let us observe that when we use these words we are describing what is an act of attention—attention at one time voluntary, now absolutely the master. The usual efforts that are made to escape from its bondage seem calculated only to strengthen it. For example, it is bitterly attacked, or it is argued against, or the victims are urged to put it away, or to fight against it.[1] Now, in following that advice the sinner must turn his attention once more on his sin, call it up, and look at it. But the very need for the advice lies in the fact that the bare thought of his sin passes instantly to the passionate and irresistible desire for the act. To attack iniquity therefore in this way is to tempt to iniquity; it is to bring it back in all its emotional force. The same holds true concerning prayer. To pray *against* certain sins to which we have rendered ourselves liable is to strengthen them; and that

The Attention is captured.

[1] St. Paul's advice is: 'Flee' (2 Tim. ii. 22). 'Whatsoever things are lovely, think on these' (Phil. iv. 8).

for the reason that prayer against them is directing attention *to* them; and to direct our attention to them is to find ourselves once more enjoying them, and that is more than half the victory for the sin. This explains why some men sin in spite of their prayers. Delacroix, in describing the life of St. Teresa, says: 'This state of division and war kept her tendencies in check, but also kept them alive by the very effort she directed against them.' The continual struggle against sin keeps it active. Men fight their iniquities and their temptations hand to hand, and the more they do so the stronger the iniquities or the temptations grow. The Gospel remedy and the psychological is to turn to God. In truth, the only effective inhibition of any inward evil is to turn the attention not on the evil we mean to flee but on the life we mean to attain. 'Forgetting the things which are behind, we press towards the mark of our high calling.' And we forget, not by trying to forget, but by setting our mind on the goal. We do not first die to sin in order that we may thereafter live to God; we live to God, and so die to sin. In my boyhood I was taken to see a famous quarry. Over what appeared to me a great gulf had been made a pathway one plank broad for wheel-barrows,

Attention inhibits.

and over that perilous path quarrymen were wheeling loads of earth. I asked how the thing was possible, and a quarryman explained that he was able to wheel the barrow without stumbling by fixing his eye on the farther goal. He did not ignore the gulf and the danger; certainly did not deny their existence; he was aware of them. It was because of their presence that he kept his eye fixed on the goal. But it was his concentrated attention on that that kept him safe.

That this malady of a soul enslaved by sin is a malady of attention and not a bodily disease may be proved from many lives. Three instances will suffice, one perhaps humorous, the others tragic. A young man living an exceedingly careless life used to say to a friend who visited him often and pled with him on behalf of God, that drink was nothing to him, and that he could give up that at any moment; but he added, smiling: 'My temptation is my pipe; I could never give up smoking.' Drink had a firmer hold of him than he imagined, and one day, under its influence, he assaulted his foreman, was arrested, and sentenced to thirty days' imprisonment. His friend called on him in prison, and had a serious talk with him. Like other first offenders, he was very peni-

Experience in Gaol.

tent, and was resolved never to touch alcohol again. But he said: 'I have no desire for it; and have had no struggle over it; it never has occurred to me once since I entered the gate. What will surprise you,' he added with a smile, 'is this, that I have never once wished for a smoke. It occurs to me no more than drink; they are both dead.' [1] Near the end of his term his friend found him as clearly resolute on the question of drink. 'No,' he said, 'I'll never touch it again. But, man, how I'll enjoy a smoke! Yes, when the time drew near I began to think about it again, and then back it came.' It ceased to be a desire when attention ceased; it returned with attention to it. In the Black Hole of Calcutta the heat and the thirst were a torture, but the men bore them with courage until water was handed in. Then attention was concentrated on a possible satisfaction of their thirst; the desire became irresistible,

[1] This is the common experience of those who are sentenced to gaol. Our gaols are peopled by those who are the victims of drink, and if drink were a disease, then the gaols would be infirmaries, and the medical attendants would be called on continually to deal with this nervous condition. The fact is that the crave dies when the prisoner crosses the threshold of his cell. One of the authorised visitors to the Calton Gaol in Edinburgh assures me this is the case. Among the very worst there is no crave and no struggle to master it. For the time at least, and for some through life, it is dead.

and the men trampled each other to death. Still another instance. The victim of alcohol whose case I have referred to was its helpless slave for upwards of six years. No argument availed, no influence of her old home or of her children seemed to touch her, no suffering or sorrow. And yet one evening, in the full tide of her iniquity, she gave it up, and neither the desire for it nor the thought of it as a possible escape from pain or worry has ever come back even for a moment. Her attention was redirected and captured by another interest, and in a moment she was free.[1]

But if it is merely a matter of attention, why do so many men remain slaves who would fain be free? Now, the will has worked such marvels in human history that we need not be surprised if men think it can do anything. It has built up the sciences, fashioned society, made and unmade empires, and subdued the very powers of nature to be its servants. To wills that can do these things it must often seem that the mastery of a bad habit is a trifle. And seeing a bad habit is only a habit of attending to the wrong thing, why not attend to the right? Nothing can be easier? Well, nothing is easier to those

Why not attend to the Right?

[1] In the experience of the present writer, the simple acceptance of the love and help of God produces instant and final deliverance.

who can do it, and who take the right way of doing it. But look at the man who has his attention fixed on the wrong thing. How can he attend to the right when the thought of the right is not in all his mind, when his attention is riveted on the wrong? To the margin of the field of consciousness the right will sometimes come; but down a thousand avenues suggestions of the evil are incessantly hurrying to crowd it out. Everything in heaven and earth leads up quickly to the thought of sin, attention is directed to it, caught by it, fascinated by it. There is nothing of good for the will to grasp, or if for an instant good is grasped, it is let go again. Attention cannot be directed to what is not in the consciousness or is driven violently out of it. Moreover, how is he to attend to something from which his whole nature turns away, or avert his attention from what his whole nature desires? We are apt to forget that an act of attention is not a 'mere' act of attention, standing apart from the rest of life. It is always a result, and where voluntary the result of our personal solidarity, *i.e.* the expression of our whole past, and the revelation therefore of what we really are at the moment. It is true that men sometimes grow weary of the bondage and desire to end

Bondage.

it; in the misery of a disease or a disaster which they have brought on themselves they would fain escape. Or in the quiet backwater of the current they get once more a feeling of the worth of a good life and honestly desire they had it. They desire, but cannot attain it; they are enslaved. For their desire is thwarted by the thought of the pain of breaking with their companions, or of what their companions would say; or by a secret dislike of religious people; or because they are delighted to find that they are capable of seeing the evil of their past and wishing they were good; or because they think it is too late to turn. The desire is not strong enough to overcome their aversion, which aversion is in reality itself a desire of sin working more powerfully within them than their desire of good. And this toying with chance desires of good that come and go, and fits of regret, and intentions to do better by and by, only weaken their will and deepen their slavery.

Every check upon this fatal concentration of the mind on sin is consequently of the highest moral value.[1] Thus civilisation is

[1] The social work which so many of our congregations engage in now has its great value in two things, that it develops new and worthy interests in the minds of those who would otherwise be learning mischief on our streets, and that it brings them into contact with Christian personalities.

not an enemy but the best friend of religion; and wide culture and a many-sided interest in life keep open many of the ways by which appeals can reach us in behalf of what is unselfish, disinterested, and universal. We must remember that sin is not a thing, not even an act, but an attitude of the mind and will. It is a relationship, a personal relationship (of the wrong kind) to God. It may be rebellion, enmity, alienation; or it may be indifference, neglect, the putting of Him into the second place in practical affairs, or the leaving Him altogether out of account; or it may be what is perhaps commonest of all, a fear of Him that makes the thought of Him unwelcome. Men do without Him, think that without Him they do best, that life is freest and fullest when He can be left out of mind, and they are allowed to manage life in their own way. That is sin.

The question then arises: Is this character of sin, this alienation or indifference, or fear, one that slowly becomes unalterable? Do the years make it permanent? Does sin utterly destroy the original capacity for moral choice which is born in the child, and all that subconscious system that has its associations with the divine? We have seen that it destroys a man's power of turning to God of him-

self; is he therefore beyond the power of every moral appeal? He has resisted the manifold appeals of this ever-changing life, appeals of blessings and sufferings, kindness and severity, forgiveness and punishment, warnings and encouragements; what else remains to be done? If nothing can be done, then the soul remains eternally separated from God, which is the second death. If something can be done it is because men cannot finally sin away their capacity for God. A sinful life at its worst has something unstable in it, and is liable to be surprised and overthrown, while the righteous life grows more and more stable with the years, because not sin but righteousness is of the essence of the soul. It is not easy to believe that a false view of God will for ever hold the attention of any man. What can be done to break sin's fascination we may rest assured will be done, and then the soul will escape as a bird out of the fowler's snare and mount to God.

Can it be broken?

## CHAPTER V

### THE LIBERATING OF THE SOUL THROUGH CONVERSION

THE question now arises how the fascination of a sin over a man's soul can be broken. Is it possible to set him at liberty again ? The accomplishment of this is called his conversion. Now, a change of this radical kind is common enough in other spheres than that of religion. As we have seen, it takes place continually in politics, in art, in friendship; one's likings may be revolutionised from poetry to science, from a life of social gaiety to a life of social service, from the whirl of a city life to farm life in the Far West. There are deeper needs in man than he imagines at first, which some day clamour for his attention; thoughts in him which slowly ripen, breaking at last into fulness of power and compelling him to change. The nature both of the demand and of the change will depend upon that deeper life which is being nourished and enriched by the many experiences of the day.

## INTELLECTUAL CONVERSION

LET us take the case of John Stuart Mill.[1] He had been educated by his father, who discarded all belief in a God, and brought up his son entirely without religion. But there came a day when the teaching of the father was no longer sufficient for the son; a deeper soul within him called for satisfaction, which he found not in Christianity but in Wordsworth's delight in nature. He says:— John Stuart Mill.

'It was in the autumn of 1826. I was in a dull state of nerves, such as everybody is occasionally liable to, unsusceptible to enjoyment or pleasurable excitement; one of those moods when what is pleasure at other times becomes insipid or

[1] *Autobiography*, by John Stuart Mill, ch. v. This Crisis in his Mental History, as he himself describes it, is explained by Professor Bain in *J. S. Mill: a Criticism*, p. 38, in this way: 'That the dejection so feelingly depicted was due to physical causes, and that the chief of these causes was overworking the brain, may, I think, be certified beyond all reasonable doubt. . . . Fifteen or twenty years later was soon enough to readjust his scheme of enjoyment, by delicate choice and variation of stimulants, by the cultivation of poetry and passive susceptibility. It so happened that on the present occasion his morbid symptoms were purely subjective; there was no apparent derangement in any bodily organ.' We have fortunately travelled a long way even in Psychology since Professor Bain's day, and can now be juster in our judgment of such an autobiography as Mill's.

indifferent; the state, I should think, in which converts to Methodism are when smitten by their first "conviction of sin." In this frame of mind it occurred to me to put a question directly to myself, "Suppose that all your objects in life were realised; that all the changes in institutions and opinions which you are looking forward to could be completely effected at this very instant; would this be a great joy and happiness to you?" And an irrepressible self-consciousness distinctly answered, "No." At this my heart sank within me: the whole foundation on which my life was constructed fell down; all my happiness was to have been found in the continual pursuit of this end. The end had ceased to charm, and how could there ever again be any interest in the means? I seemed to have nothing left to live for. At first I hoped that the cloud would pass away of itself; but it did not. A night's sleep, the sovereign remedy for the smaller vexations of life, had no effect on it. I awoke to a renewed consciousness of the woeful fact. I carried it with me into all companies, into all occupations. Hardly anything had power to cause me even a few minutes oblivion of it. For some months the cloud seemed to grow thicker and thicker. . . . This state of my thoughts and feelings made the fact of my reading Wordsworth for the first time (in the autumn of 1826) an important event of my life. These poems addressed themselves powerfully to one of the strongest of my pleasurable susceptibilities, the love of rural objects and natural

scenery; to which I had been indebted, not only for much of the pleasure of my life, but quite recently for relief from one of my longest lapses into depression. In this power of rural beauty over me there was a foundation laid for taking pleasure in Wordsworth's poetry; the more so as his scenery lies among mountains, which, owing to my early Pyrenean excursion, were my ideal of natural beauty. But Wordsworth would never have had any great effect on me if he had merely placed before me beautiful pictures of natural scenery. What made Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind was that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. They seemed to be the very culture of the feelings which I was in search of; in them I seemed to draw from a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared in by all human beings; which had no connection with struggle or imperfection, but would be made richer by every improvement in the physical or social condition of mankind. . . . I found that he too had had similar experience to mine; that he also had felt that the first freshness of youthful enjoyment of life was not lasting; but that he had sought for compensation and found it in the way in which he was now teaching me to find it. The result was that I gradually but completely emerged from my habitual depression, and was never again subject to it.'

There could be no better illustration than this of the truth we shall meet again, that conversion is a movement confined within the limits of the *ideas* in the mind of the person converted. Mill had been educated without religion, so that as he tells us he could no more conceive himself believing in the Christian God than in Jupiter: the possibility of thinking Christianity true was barred out by philosophic conviction. When therefore his spirit called for something deeper than his father's training had opened up, he was merely converted from a culture of the intellect to 'a culture of the feelings.' Yet Wordsworth was a spiritual *teacher*: 'I am a teacher,' he said of himself, 'or I am nothing.' But the spiritual truth that lay at the heart of his poetry Mill could not receive. The light that was in him was, here at least, darkness.

This same kind of intellectual conversion will sometimes bring peace to a man troubled in mind as he passes from what we should call a fuller and richer theological belief to one much lower and poorer. This is due to the fact that he had been straining to live beyond his convictions, and that, therefore, a falling back upon what he could honestly hold brought him actually nearer to God. The revelation of these earlier inconsistencies may have come to him suddenly, by a word from

a friend, but he gains religiously by it. So too, strange as it may at first appear, peace of mind may really come to a troubled soul by giving up all religious beliefs, as in the case of Harriet Martineau, who tells of the joy she felt the first evening she stepped out on the balcony of her house at Ambleside, and, looking up into the starry heavens, could say: 'There is no God.' Francis Newman,[1] starting from the evangelical faith of his father's home, took a theological path the opposite of his famous brother's, and passing from one stage of negation to another, reached a goal far enough away from faith in Christ. But he maintained that the change brought him no loss in spiritual life—the soul, he said, remained intact. This, however, would seem to be impossible, if thought counts for anything at all.

In like manner changes of the widest kind take place within the borders of the Christian Church—changes which are often called conversions, in which men move, for example, from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism, or from Protestantism to Catholicism, or from denomination to denomination within the borders of Protestantism. These men say

[1] *The Soul, Its Sorrows and Its Aspirations*, by Francis William Newman.

that in the change they find God and a peace and fulness of spiritual life which they had never found before. To all appearance these are only changes of intellectual and not spiritual position, although radical enough to affect their whole life. The necessity (as they conceive it) of the change was due to the inner necessity, which we all feel, of attaining a complete unification, or harmony, of our whole inner life; and something in our past experience, or our education, or our interpretation of the universe, or our fundamental being—something which is now subconscious and irresistible—has forced us on. It has been the slow maturing of ideas in our minds, which is brought to completion by some simple incident. The inward eye then perceives, as by a flash, the meaning of life—of the past and of all that is happening to-day—and the decision is made which is so surprising to those who are without, but which to the man who makes it so natural and inevitable.

### MORAL CONVERSION

BUT there is a deeper conversion than this, in which a man is driven by the compulsion of his moral nature to seek peace with God. He must find a reconciliation

with the very heart and purpose of the universe. His spiritual nature has gone wrong somehow, and right it he must. All the world knows Carlyle's struggle as he himself has depicted it in *Sartor Resartus*.[1] Thomas Carlyle.

'To me the Universe was all void of Life, of Purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility: it was one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb. O the vast, gloomy, solitary Golgotha, and Mill of Death! Why was the Living banished thither companionless, conscious? Why, if there is no Devil; nay, unless the Devil is your God? Full of such humour, and perhaps the miserablest man in the whole French Capital or Suburbs, was I, one sultry Dogday, after much perambulation, toiling along the dirty little Rue Saint-Thomas de l'Enfer, among civic rubbish enough, in a close atmosphere, and over pavements hot as Nebuchadnezzar's Furnace; whereby doubtless my spirits were little cheered; when, all at once, there rose a Thought in me, and I asked myself: "What *art* thou afraid of? Wherefore, like a coward, dost thou for ever pip and whimper, and go cowering and trembling? Despicable biped! what is the sum-total of the worst that lies before thee? Death? Well, Death; and say the pangs of Tophet too, and all that the Devil and Man may, will, or can do against thee! Hast thou not a heart, canst thou not suffer what-

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, by Thomas Carlyle, Book II. Chap. vii.

soever it be; and, as a Child of Freedom, though outcast, trample Tophet itself under thy feet, while it consumes thee? Let it come then; I will meet it and defy it!" And, as I so thought, there rushed like a stream of fire over my whole soul; and I shook base Fear away from me for ever. I was strong, of unknown strength; a spirit, almost a god. Ever from that time, the temper of my misery was changed, not Fear or whining Sorrow was it, but Indignation and grim, fire-eyed Defiance. Thus had the EVERLASTING NO pealed authoritatively through all the recesses of my Being, of my ME; and then was it that my whole ME stood up, in native God-created majesty, and with emphasis recorded its Protest. Such a Protest, the most important transaction in Life, may that same Indignation and Defiance, in a psychological point of view, be fitly called. The Everlasting No had said: "Behold, thou art fatherless, outcast, and the Universe is mine (the Devil's)"; to which my whole ME now made answer: "I am not thine, but Free, and forever hate thee!" It is from this hour that I incline to date my Spiritual New-birth, or Baphometic Fire-baptism; perhaps I directly thereupon began to be a Man.'

Or let us take again the conversion of that marvellous literary and religious genius, Tolstoy.[1] He had been trained in the beliefs

[1] *My Confession*, by Count Tolstoy; *The Life of Tolstoy*, by Aylmer Maude, p. 392 ff.

and practices of the ordinary aristocrat of the Orthodox Greek Church, but they had dropped from him at a word from his brother. For years he had lived the life of a rich, brilliant, famous man, without a thought of religion or morality. At fifty years of age he found himself possessed of all that the world could give him. He had a good wife who loved him and whom he loved, good children, and a large estate which without much trouble improved and increased. He was respected by his relations and acquaintances. He was praised by others so that he could without self-deception consider his name famous. He enjoyed a strength of mind and body such as is seldom met with among men of his kind, matching a peasant at mowing, and able to work with brain for eight or ten hours at a stretch. In the midst of experiences like these there gradually grew up within him the sense that it was all vanity and vexation of spirit. What is the good of life ? he asked himself. What does it lead to ?

'My mental condition presented itself to me in this way : my life is some stupid and spiteful joke some one has played on me. Though I did not acknowledge a "some one" who created me, yet that form of representation—that "some one" had played an evil and stupid joke on me by placing me

in the world—was the form of expression that came most naturally to me.'

The thought of suicide began to haunt him, and he had to hide a rope lest he should suddenly hang himself from the cross-piece in his study.

He felt 'like one lost in a wood who, horrified at having lost his way, rushes about, wishing to find the road, yet knows that each step he takes confuses him more and more; and still cannot help rushing about. It was indeed terrible. And to rid myself of the terror I wished to kill myself.'

The question that had brought him to this pass was that simplest of all questions lying in the soul of every man, from the foolish child to the wisest elder: What will come of my life? Why should I live, or wish for anything, or do anything? Is there any meaning in life which death the inevitable does not destroy? So he considered the answers men had given through the ages—the answer of ignorant men and women, who had never seen the question; the answer of mirth and folly, which was the answer given by those of his own circle; the answer of the strong, who would end life because it is a stupid joke; and the answer of the weak who see the situation and cling to it. Then

he came to understand that if he was to get an answer from men, it must be from those who see a meaning in life, those milliards of the past and present who know it, and by the knowledge of it support the burden of their lives.

'And on examining the matter,' he writes, 'I saw that the milliards of mankind always have had and still have a knowledge of the meaning of life, but *that* knowledge is their "faith," which I could not but reject. "It is God, one and three, the creation in six days, the devil and angels, and all the rest that I cannot accept as long as I retain my reason," said I to myself. My position was terrible. I knew I could find nothing along the path of reasonable knowledge, except a denial of life; and in faith I could find nothing but a denial of reason, still more impossible to me than a denial of life.'

Tolstoy found himself in the place which many of our countrymen have been driven to face when they were told that the Christian religion rested on some old-world views of creation and some deductions of the creeds. But his difficulties had drawn him nearer the common people.

'And I began to look well into the life and faith of these people, and the more I considered it, the more I became convinced that they have a real faith, which is a necessity to them, and alone gives

their life a meaning and makes it possible for them to live. I saw that the whole life of these people was passed in heavy labour, and that they were content with life. While we think it terrible that we have to suffer and die, these folk live and suffer, and approach death with tranquillity, and in most cases gladly. And I learned to love those people. The more I came to know their life the more I loved them, and the easier it became for me to live. I understood that *that* is life itself, and that the meaning given to that life is true; and I accepted it. I then understood that my answer to the question, "What is my life?" when I said that life is evil, was quite correct. The only mistake was that that answer referred to *my* life, but not to life in general. My life, a life of indulgence and desires, was meaningless and evil. And I understood the truth which I afterwards found in the Gospels, that men love darkness rather than the light because their deeds are evil; and that to see things as they are, one must think and speak of the life of humanity, and not of the life of the minority, who are parasites of life.'

So the great soul struggled on through doubts and questionings, through readings in philosophy and the study of men, until at last he exclaimed to himself: 'God Exists.'

'And I had only for an instant to admit that, and at once life rose within me, and I felt the possibility and joy of being. But again, from the admission of the existence of a God I went on to seek my

relations with Him ; and again I imagined *that* God —our Creator in three persons who sent His Son, the Saviour—and again *that* God, detached from the world and from me, melts like a block of ice, melts before my eyes, and again nothing remains, and again the spring of life dries up within me, and I come to despair, and feel that I have nothing to do but to kill myself. And the worst of all is that I feel I cannot do it. Not twice or three times, but tens and hundreds of times, I reached those conditions first of joy and animation, and then of despair and consciousness of the impossibility of living.'

The thought 'There is no God' fought with the thought 'There is a God,' and when faith rose again there rose also glad waves of life within him. Then he saw that when he had faith in God he more truly lived than before.

'I need only be aware of God to live,' he said ; 'I need only forget Him or disbelieve in Him, and I die. To know God and to live is one and the same thing. God is life. Live seeking God, and then you will not live without God. And more than ever before, all within me and around me lit up, and the light did not again abandon me.'

This account of a struggle for faith has been worth telling at such length, because it is the story of so many in our own time—the story

of a fight between a real faith in God, in the wisdom and love of God manifested in life on the one hand, and on the other some imperfectly understood intellectual interpretation of faith. Important as the true interpretation is, it is not of the first importance. This alone is vital, that there be a clear decision to live for God, whatever be the final language in which it is expressed. Men of historic name, like Mazzini, Ruskin, Bismarck, make their decision, and thereafter they spend their strength not for their own ends of pride, ambition, pleasure, but for the peace, the freedom, the elevation, and the bettering of man. Men of this kind are found outside the bounds of the Christian Church, although there is in them very much of what the Christian Church stands to further. They set before them a high end, we may venture to say a divine end, and they live for it, deny themselves for it, and fight for it bravely. The great spiritual warfare of the world has been shared by those soldiers of humanity. There is a sense in which it is true to say that they are moved by the Spirit of God; and the time when they first felt His call and consecrated themselves to the work was the time of their conversion.

### CHRISTIAN CONVERSION

Christian Conversion.

BUT although these are familiar uses of the word conversion, they are not what is understood by it among Christian men: we understand by it the definite, conscious turning of a man from sin to God. It is not merely a moral change, a reform in conduct or in temper, but a change in his personal relation to One who is over all. In conversion he passes from a condition of estrangement or indifference to one of friendship and trust that will involve, of course, in many lives a complete moral revolution, but the moral revolution is the result of the conversion, not the conversion itself. The conversion is the acceptance of God's love and the surrender to it of the whole of life. Writers on the Psychology of Conversion tend to deal with it chiefly as a moral change. This is true, for example, of Professors James and Leuba. Professor James defines it in a general way as 'the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior, and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities.'[1] So,

[1] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 189.

too, Professor Leuba [1] almost removes the thought of God from conversion altogether, and would make it the attaining of a unity within the moral sense, giving even the name of faith to the joyous conviction and assurance that all is well with one. But what the Christian convert is primarily concerned about is not his own mental state but God. It is like the healing of a quarrel with an old friend. Our desire for reconciliation is not merely or mainly a desire to get rid of a disagreeable feeling, but a desire to remove from our friend's life the sense of wrong. We have offended *him* — that is the origin of our misery, and we shall not attain the joyous assurance that all is well with us until *he* has forgiven us. In the world of religion, our acceptance of the Great Friend's forgiveness and our trust in His help is Conversion. Of course, a Christian is conscious, and painfully conscious, of his sins; they are the evidence to him of an unfinished work. Who can forgive sins but God only? Who can forgive the wrong we have done one but the one we have wronged? Our avarice or pride or passion is the wrong, and when our sin has mastered us so that we cannot escape from continually attending to it, we may

[1] Professor Leuba, *Psychological Origin of Religion.*

well believe that no man can help, and that God Himself cannot forgive us. Here indeed is agony. But at the heart of it is the sense that we are estranged from God. The restoration of friendship between a man and God is Conversion.

No 'Break in Life needed.'

We have contended that there is no necessity in any one's life for this alienation, and that the meaning of Christian training and of the Christian home is to avoid it. The fact that sin lies deep in the human heart is no hindrance to a happy development of the spiritual nature into a conscious Sonship towards the Father; for the sense of sin is present in every one at any moment of his life, whatever his religion has been. But just as our sinful nature is developed by the play of circumstances that suggest self-seeking, so may our spiritual nature be developed by the appeal of love. The man who has had the good fortune to be trained in this way, and has accepted the training, will not be conscious of any break with his past life in coming to God; he will not be able to date his conversion. When Count Zinzendorf [1] assured the Moravian Church that he could not tell the day when he first decided for

[1] Professor Binnie on Zinzendorf in *The Evangelical Succession.*

Christ, and had no knowledge of a time when he did not love Him, he raised within the minds of the brethren the most serious misgivings. But he stood by his assertion that he had had no experience of a change such as they desiderated. And many thousands before and since have asserted the same. Indeed no one who has read, even moderately, in Christian biography will doubt it; and it may even be true that the majority of believing men and women have known no break in their religious course. Even those writers whose interest is in conscious Conversion, but who have studied the facts at first-hand, speak of a 'protracted' Conversion; and the protraction may start in infancy like the child's love of his mother, may grow quietly through the years, and burst into the fulness of consciousness only at the thought of loss. Still, within this quiet progress there will be movement hither and thither, times of decline and of growth, of slackness and of activity, of doubt and of intense devotion. From time to time also there will be new decisions in the face of difficulties and temptations, in which the soul will rise to new heights, influencing permanently the later years. Delacroix [1] says

[1] Delacroix, *Etudes d'Histoire et de Psychologie du Mysticisme.*

that no religious life of high attainment has been without this moment of decision.

The Moment of Decision.

Now, it is the value of this moment of decision that has made many men work for it deliberately and count it the main subject of preaching, believing that all conversion must be treated as sudden, else few will be concerned about it at all. Let us consider what it means. To begin with, we must acknowledge the patent fact that many are converted in a moment. The truth is presented to the soul in some vivid way, and instantly the soul answers with joy—a sudden flash and the work is over. This leap of the spirit is found in any sphere of life: men are born in a moment into new worlds of thought or feeling. Wallace was made a patriot by the sight of a wrong done, so was Moses. Poets, like Keats, have their call to their life's work just as prophets had: statesmen and reformers and deliverers have theirs. Students of Browning will remember how unweariedly he teaches the value of the one great moment in life in which the whole of the past seems to gather itself together, and utter its whole meaning in one act which with its glory blots out all unworthiness for ever. There are few men but have known how a passionate moment has lifted the whole of

life to a higher plane, consuming the gathered dross of years. And commonplace things and events do it, a sickness or a danger or a great joy. There is hardly anything so insignificant that it may not accomplish this highest of all missions.[1]

> 'Oh, not alone when life flows still do truth
> And power emerge, but also when strange chance
> Ruffles its current.'

But we must ask what the explanation of all this is.

A Call to the Subconscious.

We remind ourselves then that the mind cannot receive any statement or truth that is absolutely new. If the new has no point of contact with what is already in the mind, it can have no intelligible meaning. But no sooner is an intelligible statement made than it calls up a 'system' within our minds—a system of kindred or associated thoughts, memories and feelings. This system may have been forming for years, touched and quickened now and then by being brought to the margin of the field of consciousness, only to be lost again. It has not been strong enough to force itself to the centre in our quiet moments, and nothing has happened to bring it vividly forward. But it is there

[1] Browning's *Paracelsus*, vol. i. 71.

in the subconscious, waiting its call. When the ripe moment has arrived, a trifle may do it. There are times in Alpine climbing when the stroke of an ice-axe or the shout of a climber will set an avalanche in motion. It was not the shout that was fit to move a thousand tons of snow: it was the weight of the snow itself in equipoise so fine that the least vibration of the air could start it. So, too, thoughts and feelings gather until a word will give them life and force, to the overthrowing of spiritual dominions, principalities and powers. But the fitting word must be rightly spoken; and the right word is always an appeal to something already within the soul. It is a reminiscence of a happy time gone by, or a vision of a happy time to come; and the vision is itself the expression of all that is best in one's original nature and one's past experience. We have by our constitution a spiritual nature which can be spoken to and evoked, and which does often rise in all its divine authority and assert itself supreme within the soul. It may have lain buried under many years of sin—dormant, dead to all appearance. But it may be questioned whether it ever dies, for in the most hopeless circumstances and in the strangest manner it comes to life and

power. This resurrection, however, is most assured when there are stored up in the mind memories of good. In a work called *New England Revivals,* consisting of reports written by ministers on what happened in their own congregations in the years 1797-1814, a time of revival, one comes upon remarks like this: 'The converts are chiefly from families where one or both the parents were professing Christians or hopefully pious.' What had the piety of the parents to do with the conversion of their children? This, that the appeal of the preachers and of the movement itself was to the knowledge of Christ and the moral affirmations lying dormant within them—to their memories of a Christian childhood and youth, of the life of their homes, of their parents' lessons and prayers, warnings and entreaties—all submerged under the tide of the world's care, but lying await for the true appeal. Thus it might be said that conversion is reversion—reversion to the day when our souls were in contact with God, believing Him a friend.

The Appeal of Nature.

But something else is needed than a memory however tender, for that would at the best bring nothing more than regret. There must be something that gives the heart rest from sin, and permits the voice of God to be

heard. Perhaps in our day, if we are to know God, more than ever before is needed the advice 'Be still.' And in this stillness many a man, both in our time and in other times, has met God.

'On his way to a church near Manresa, Ignatius Loyola sat down facing the stream which was running deep. While he was sitting there, the eyes of his mind were opened so as to understand and comprehend spiritual things with such clearness that for him all these things were made new. If all the enlightenment and help he had received from God in the whole course of his life were gathered together in one heap, these all would appear less than had been given him at this one time.'[1]

So he himself testified. Brother Lawrence[2] at the age of sixteen was so impressed by the sight in winter of a tree stripped of its leaves, and by the reflection that in a short time it would again be bearing leaves and flowers and fruit, that there was kindled in him such a sense of God's power and love that he could not say it had increased in forty years. Take this from a widely different world. A living author tells of his experience as a farm lad which changed the current of his life.[3]

[1] *The Mystical Element of Religion*, by Baron von Hügel, ii. 31, note. [2] *The Spiritual Maxims of Brother Lawrence*, p. 32.
[3] *From the Bottom Up*, by Stewart Irving, chap. i. Compare

'I was sitting on the fence at the close of the day, a very happy day. I must have been moved by the colour of the sky, or by the emotion produced by the lines of a hymn I had heard in the Sunday School. It may have been both. But as I sat on the fence and watched the sun set over the trees, an emotion swept over me, and the tears began to flow. My body seemed to change as by the pouring into it of some strange, life-giving fluid. I wanted to shout, to scream aloud; but instead, I went rapidly over the hills into the woods, dropped on my knees, and began to pray. It was getting dark, but the woods were filled with light. Perhaps it was the light of my vision or the light of my mind —I know not. But when I came back into the open, I felt as though I were walking on air. As I passed through the farm-yard I came in contact with some of the men, and their questions led me to believe that some of the experience remained on my face; but I naïvely set aside their questions, and passed on down the country road to the town. That night as I climbed to the little loft, I realised for

*The Education of Christ*, by Sir William Ramsay, p. 9. Also *Nettleton and His Labours*, by Andrew Bonar, p. 20: 'While a child he was occasionally the subject of religious impressions. At one time in particular while alone in the fields and looking at the setting sun, he was powerfully impressed with the thought that he and all men must die. He was so affected that he stood for some time and wept aloud.' The biographer adds: 'But these feelings were transitory.' All feelings are transitory; but these became a part of Nettleton's preparation for a final decision later in life.

the first time in my life that I had never slept in a bed but on a pallet of straw. Many a time I had been kept awake by the gnawing pangs of hunger; but this night I was kept awake for another reason. It was an indescribable ecstasy, a new-born joy. As I lay there with my head about a foot from the thatched roof, I hummed over and over again the two lines of the hymn, sometimes breaking the continuity in giving way to tears.'

This appeal of nature, be it to farm-boy or to soldier, is more frequent than one may imagine, and its appeal of course is to that life which is already ours within. It is the calm that does it.

> 'Think you that nothing of itself will come
> But we must still be seeking?'[1]

[1] The whole passage is important both for Wordsworth's teaching, and for the meaning of the text.

> 'The eye—it cannot choose but see;
> We cannot bid the ear be still;
> Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
> Against or with our will.
>
> 'Nor less I deem that there are powers
> Which of themselves our minds impress;
> That we can feed this mind of ours
> In a wise passiveness.
>
> 'Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum
> Of things for ever speaking,
> That nothing of itself will come,
> But we must still be seeking?'
>
> —*Expostulation and Reply.*

Another instance of this is given by Dr. Dale in his *Christian Doctrine*, p. 10.

Above all poets, Wordsworth, the truest interpreter of the subconscious mind, its development, and its influence on all that is highest and best in us, bears his testimony to this ungrudgingly. Speaking of mountains, lakes, sounding cataracts, and mists and winds, he says:

'To speak of you, ye mountains and ye lakes
And sounding cataracts, ye mists and winds
That dwell among the hills where I was born,
If in my youth I have been pure in heart,
If, mingling with the world, I am content
With my own modest pleasures, and have lived
With God and Nature communing, removed
From little enmities and low desires—
The gift is yours. . . .
. . . The gift is yours,
Ye winds and sounding cataracts! 'tis yours,
Ye mountains! thine, O Nature! Thou hast fed
My lofty speculations; and in thee
For this weary heart of ours, I find
A never-failing principle of joy
And purest passion.'[1]

The truth is, God has a thousand gates by which he can find access to the human heart. Or rather, He has a thousand messengers whose diverse voices call to our diverse natures, and awaken them to some new vision of His glory.

[1] *The Prelude*, Book II., at close.

## WHO ARE CONVERTED ?

ONE of the questions most keenly discussed in connection with conversion is the age at which it most frequently takes place; and tables and statements are made showing that the highest number of conversions take place between the ages of sixteen and twenty, and that after forty there are practically none. Now, to make that statement in public will produce two results. If the people come to know that their hope of salvation decreases rapidly after twenty, and that they are practically hopeless after forty, then the expectation will fulfil itself: attendance at the meetings will be limited to those who may be expected to receive benefit from them. But the other result is a much more serious one: the preaching will be adapted solely to adolescents. The preacher's appeal and his general methods will be such as move the young, and his purpose will be to bring about a crisis. He will have before his mind the necessity of this break in the conscious life. A careful examination of a large number of sermons and addresses delivered with this end in view reveals a certain state of mind in the speaker towards his audience. Very naturally he tends to bar out as improper

Conversion of the Young.

all views of Scripture but his own, to shut off all avenues of approach to God but one; he knows the subtle and tremendous power of sin, how urgent it is in its appeal to youthful souls, and how it may leap out on them with sudden surprise. His entreaty therefore has a note of great urgency calling for immediate decision: now is the hour of salvation—to-morrow may be too late—sin is waiting at the door. All which is true and fair. But clearly the method is that which is best adapted for youth. So, too, is the appeal to the more tender emotions, and to the ideal. We have graphic tables showing that as the body develops and varies so do the percentages of conversions, and bringing out as a result that the great bulk of them happen between the ages of ten and twenty, and that from that period the decline is rapid until beyond thirty (or as some say forty) there are practically none at all. Some writers go the length of saying that there is a causal connection between the approach of physical maturity and conversion. Their argument is like this, that as the body ripens, new instincts, thoughts, emotions rise to the mind; we then have the emergence of the altruistic side of life, the idyllic, the ideal; then the world opens up, broadens, deepens, becomes again

Adolescence.

what it was in childhood—a world of wonders with prospects of splendour, and promises of endless and unspeakable delight. We all have known it; and the contention is, that to this expectant and half-ecstatic mood religion with its visions and hopes makes its successful appeal. 'Conversion,' says Professor Starbuck, 'is a distinctively adolescent phenomenon.'[1] The question arises then, where is the point of contact? What is it in adolescence that makes it open to a call from God? The argument is that it is the incursion of the tender, the generous, the idyllic and the ideal world which has brought the young man and maiden within reach of the divine. I cannot but think a great deal too much has been made of this, and would venture to contend that the connection (undoubted as it is) is the other way about. The new world of youth is tender and generous and idyllic—in short ideal—because the soul is first saturated with Christian teaching.[2] The young have acquired this at home,

[1] *Vide* Starbuck's *Psychology of Religion*, p. 28. But for this whole subject of Religion in Adolescence *vide* Stanley Hall's great work *Adolescence*; Professor Coe on *The Spiritual Life*, and his *Education in Religion and Morals*; Professor Pratt's *The Psychology of Religious Belief*.

[2] We must remember that all this ideal and idyllic side of adolescence is the characteristic of the youth of a *Christian*

The Rise of the Ideal.

at school, in books and magazines ; they have heard it in speeches of the worthiest citizens ; it has passed into the community and its institutions ; it is the public standard by which men and events are tried. This Christian teaching and sentiment have touched life at every point ; and long before the new world of adolescence breaks upon the soul, the soul is preparing to transform it into idyllic beauty. The lad and the girl, it may well be, have forgotten all their early glimpses into the unseen, all the cadences that once moved them ; all the people that influenced them have (it may be) long ago become commonplace. Forgotten all of it perhaps, but none of it lost. And when the dawn of the new day comes, the whole soul rises to greet it. Thus, it is the Christian teaching of the bygone days, now sub-conscious, that transforms the adolescent world into an ideal world, and answers the appeal of the preacher with a decision for Christ.

When men attempt to base religion on a bodily instinct, they forget that an instinct is

land. There is little of it in the youth of the heathen, and little of it among those of our own youth who are brought up apart from Christian teaching. Yet we must bear in mind that the nature of man is always a spiritual nature.

essentially different from a desire. A desire has set an *end* before it, involves already in germ a conception, an interpretation of life. This, it says, will enable me to realise my thought of what life should be. Now the whole trend of the soul's history, ending in tragedy, or futility, or in splendour, will depend on which goal is set before it—on the seeing steadily of that goal, and the seeing of it in colours of darkness or light. Therefore we cannot wait till adolescence is reached before we win the soul for God. That would be fatally late. The boy must know that the highest is the highest when he sees it, and must have been prepared to love it.

Conversion of the Mature.

That seems to be the reason why the young, under certain forms of preaching, surrender their hearts to the truth; but that is no reason for our saying that those past forty are rarely won. Appeals to emotion, it is true, no longer win them; urgency is wearisome; the ideals of youth have been missed or have been attained. The middle-aged ask us to speak to them about religion as rational men, quietly. Mature, earnest-minded men acknowledge themselves sinners, but they now prefer to have their souls *enlightened* in the knowledge of Christ. Life has changed for them since the days of youth,

as completely as youth was a change from boyhood. The falling away of the ideal has brought them face to face with temptations as subtle and strong as those of their adolescence; and they need *strength* to walk the long, level, dull road of middle life. Touching stories as aids to this only tire them. Is the life of a mature man, they ask, not capable of a Christian handling? It seems to me that very many Christian teachers know that need, and meet it. 'I believe,' answered one of them, 'in the converting power of edifying preaching.' But the conversions under this manner of preaching are not numbered; the converted hardly know themselves by the name, so narrow has the name become. But they know their lives are running in another channel than formerly, or perhaps running deeper and stronger in the old channel. Are they only a few? One cannot tell. An interesting remark bearing on this topic is made by one of the ministers reporting in the *New England Revivals*, concerning the work that had come under his attention. The former revival, he says (which had taken place some twenty years before), mainly affected the heads of families, and their ages ranged from twenty-five to forty-five, some being still older; whereas the

converts of the present revival, he continues, are from thirteen to twenty, and are the children of the earlier converts. Indeed men come to decision for God at all ages, if the many-sided methods of Scripture are followed; and no doubt it will be found that many of mature life come, as Richard Cecil acknowledges he came, 'by the way of contemplation.' There are thousands seeking truth, who may be missed by any method but enlightenment, and who resent all attempts to 'rush' the will. Those who can give them insight into the meaning of life, who can reconcile the ways of God to men, are those who alone can give them help. And this method is often slow, and may be imperceptible.

The difference between a sudden conversion and a gradual dawning of the light ought to be considered in relation to the difference between attention that is involuntary and attention that is voluntary. In other words, our attention on the one hand may be arrested or fascinated as it might be by a crime committed before us, or by a great fear; or, on the other hand, we may of ourselves direct our attention to a subject, return to it from time to time, gradually find an interest in it, and finally so surrender ourselves to it as to be absorbed in it com-

pletely.[1] It is in this second way an evil habit grows, and in this second way also the service of Christ has become the passion of many a man's life. In the case of sudden conversion the first impression naturally grows less vivid as the years pass, although vast numbers remain true. In the case of gradual advance, the ground gained is more likely to be held, and the impression deepens. Time is needed for work that is going to endure, and not time only but understanding.

### WHY DO SO MANY LAPSE?

Religious Ideas needed.

THE stability of the position which has been reached in an emotional crisis must be due to something else than the emotion. Why do so many lapse? Why do so many stand? What do those who stand possess, which those who lapse lack? Jonathan Edwards in his subtle and profound analysis of the Religious Affections comes to deal with strong emotions that are evanescent, and to distinguish them from emotions which he describes as spiritual or holy. And this is what he says:

'Holy affections are not heat without light, but evermore arise from some information of the under-

[1] For this question of the final surrender of the mind to God, *vide* chap. vii. p. 254 ff.

standing, some spiritual instruction that the mind receives, some light or natural knowledge. The child of God is graciously affected because he sees and understands something more of divine things than he did before, more of God or Christ, and of the glorious things exhibited in the Gospel. He has a clearer and better view than he had before, when he was not affected; either he receives some new understanding of divine things, or has his former knowledge renewed after the view was decayed: "Every one that loveth knoweth God"; "I pray that your love abound more and more in knowledge"; "The new man, viz. the man renewed in knowledge"; "Knowledge is the key that first opens the hard heart, enlarges the affections, and opens the way for men into the Kingdom of Heaven." In a footnote Edwards quotes from Shepard's Parable: "Many that have had mighty strong affections at first conversion, afterwards become dry and wither and consume and pine and die away . . . because they never had light to conviction enough as yet. . . . I never liked violent affections and pangs, but only such as were dropped in by light; because those come from an external principle and last not; but these do. Men are not affrighted by the light of the sun, though clearer than the lightning." '[1]

Yet both Shepard and Edwards understood thoroughly the worthlessness of mere know-

[1] Edwards *On Religious Affections*, Part iii. Section iv.

ledge and the necessity of affection. In the same line of reasoning Professor Caldecott in a recent essay on 'The Religious Sentiment, illustrated from the Lives of Wesley's Helpers,' discusses the stability of these men in their devotion to Christ in spite often of violent opposition. He maintains that—

'The sentiment included an inner factor, which touched the very centre of the mental nature; that this central emotion had succeeded in acquiring control over the other emotions, both singly and as sentiments, and in completely organising them; and that it was by these means associated with the attainment of an intellectual "fixed idea," and with the principal activities of the mind.' [1]

[1] Dr. Caldecott, *The Religious Sentiment*, p. 31. He says further: 'Under its influence they devoted themselves to the propagation of the beliefs which they held, the inspiration of the sentiment which dominated themselves. They worked by night and by day for periods of thirty, forty, even fifty years, in circumstances in which encouraging results had frequently but little balance over fierce opposition and bitter disappointments. And after their strenuous labours were concluded by physical decline, many of them lived long evenings of life in gradually diminished service; they all closed in serenity. At the age of seventy-nine one says: "As for the enemy I know not what has become of him." After fifty-five years of hard service another says: "I stand amazed at the goodness of God towards me." These were the men who were regarded as "enthusiasts" by the grave moralists who filled most of the ministries of the eighteenth century; but it was an enthusiasm which had the quality of lasting.'

There seems to be no doubt that the lapsing of many from the strong position they take up at conversion is due to the fact that their mental being has not been fully unified in the change; some belief or practice, some friendship or employment, inimical to the new life, has been permitted to remain in its old place and gradually assert again its old influence. The convert had not seen that to be safe he must love the Lord his God not only with all his heart, but also with all his *mind*. Now, there is a condition of the mind in which a man seems to be convinced, and yet hesitates to assent; his difficulties are met and apparently overcome; he even wishes to believe, and yet something prevents him. There is something within him, of which he may be conscious or only dimly conscious, which bars the way. If the bar is intellectual in any form, we may for the moment get him to ignore it, but it will emerge again and become more powerful than ever. It would appear then that *a system of truth*, well concatenated, however simple, is necessary for the permanency of faith—a system that meets life at the great junctures, and that has been steadily applied in the quiet hours of contemplation—in solitude or in the class-room or in the church—to the problems and needs of the human heart.

Assent.

## WHAT IS IT THAT CONVERTS ?

WE are brought at last to the question : What is the power that converts, that arrests a man in a state of indifference or sin, and brings him to abandon it and give himself to God ? Conversion, we may remind ourselves, is a new personal relationship on the part of a man towards God. Whatever the fountain-head of the change may be, conversion is the part a man takes in it on his own behalf. The change in God's relationship to him (if there is any) is matter for Theology—we are dealing now only with the change within a man. And we say, a man's new personal relationship towards God will arise from some new perception of God. His alienation from Him has at the foundation of it a misunderstanding. No doubt when we have given ourselves to sin we resist God because He is against our ways ; we hate Him because we know He condemns our sins. But we took to these ways because we did not see that God was love, and that His way was fullness of life. There was sin in our blindness no doubt, but it was blindness ; and to change we must see. Somehow we must be brought to understand Him, and our whole heart stirred to love Him. And both

A New Perception of God.

the revelation of God, and the winning of the heart to Him, have come (as such light and heat in union seem always to come) through a Person.

Christianity is the relationship of Personality to Personality—the Personality of Jesus Christ to the personality of man. The first movement in this new relationship must come to us from without; yet it must be ours —a movement from the very centre of our inner life. The worst of us at his very worst has something in him to which God can appeal—something akin to God, round which (in a land like this) gather thoughts and feelings that in their multitude and their variety have constituted a subconscious life, and have made it possible for God to appeal to us. And He makes this appeal through Jesus Christ. The Christian comes to know God, and enters into fellowship with Him through Jesus; he learns to trust Him, to commit himself completely to Him as to a Friend in whom he has unwavering confidence. Now, in many narratives of conversions, instead of this it would appear that it is the fear of God's wrath and not surrender to a merciful Father that is at the root of the change. Certainly the sense of sin and the apprehension of mercy are closely united, and

seem to alternate in the experience of many. And yet sin is never truly seen or hated until Christ is seen and loved. Undoubtedly it is the concentrated attention upon Christ and Christ's message of the Father's mercy and love that brings about surrender and peace. The appeal is made to a mind or a mood of the convert that answers the appeal. How constantly in the history of conversions we meet the statement that a thought of home was awakened, a memory of past entreaties or opportunities, of a parting word spoken years before, of a text learned at school, of an old ideal forgotten—it is these and such as these that Christ speaks to, brings into life and power again, and uses as the weapons of His victory. The Spirit of God in Christ speaks to the Spirit of God in man, wakens it though it is dead asleep; and though it is helpless gives it power to rise and shake itself free from the burden of its sins. Every one who passes through the experience ascribes the change, not to anything he has himself done but to the power of God. And yet when he reflects on it, he finds that something fixed his mind on the Divine, riveted his attention on that to the blotting out of the thought of sin. The sin that held the field and could not by any power of his own, by any fight or prayer,

The Appeal of Christ to the Subconscious.

be dislodged, has been finally overcome by concentration on Christ, and Christ now lives and rules within him. A vice is dissolved before the love of God, as a mist before the rising sun. That may take place suddenly or gradually. Just as our interest in a subject or a person may leap upon us as from an unseen world and hold us for ever, or may be built up through years of voluntary attention and become at last the ruling passion of life, so God enters the soul by surprising us or by wooing us. And yet neither in common things nor in divine does the new life arise save on the foundation of what is already within.[1] When it leaps into life as at a

[1] This is true even of the heathen no matter how low they may be. Warneck in *The Living Forces of the Gospel* (p. 198) says: 'Even the most depraved heathen longs for contact with God, and therefore for authentic knowledge of Him, a knowledge which God alone can give. . . . The experience of missions proves that the heathen are ripe for a self-communication of God, and that they understand it at once. The claim of Christianity to be a religion revealed by God seems to offer to heathenism the broadest surface for attack, for it gives and can give no proof of this necessary foundation for all its offers and demands. But no heathen ever asks for such proof. He has an inner experience of the truth of what he hears. There is something within him that responds with the certainty of an echo. It is not credulity, it is that he is mastered by it; it is not want of judgment, it is that he is inwardly laid hold of by the Divine. The message of revealed truth appeals to the conscience, *i.e.* to the organ for the Divine in man. Stunted as this is in the heathen, it is awakened

bound, it is the leap of our own soul—the best within us—to greet the coming of the Father.

What then is it in Christ that masters the human spirit in this way? There is sometimes a tendency to ascribe this power to some one aspect or another of Christ's life and work. And perhaps it is inevitable, seeing men are so diverse in their original qualities and upbuild, that our spirits should develop through each one appropriating that mode of Christ that best helps him. Thus one man learns best to love God through the thought of the Incarnation, another through the thought of the vicarious sufferings of a Saviour. One is practical and builds up his faith on the Sermon on the Mount, and loves Christ as the great Social Leader; another is speculative, and gets at his Lord through far-reaching ideas; while still another is mystical, believing he enters into the most intimate personal communion with God, spirit to spirit. Yet it is the whole Personality of Christ in its infinite riches that is given us, and it is fellowship with Him as He in actuality is that saves us. We deal with Him as a mighty Friend who can help us, healing our

The whole Personality of Christ.

by the offer of the truth. . . . The heathen feels inwardly the power of the truth.'

wounds, delivering us from the dominion or the stain of sin, refreshing and strengthening us for the duties and trials of the day. On the one hand His love means the love of one Who *taught* the verities of the Gospels, or Who *died* on Calvary and rose again. On the other hand His teaching always has as its background the presence of One Who loved us and died for us, while again His death is never without the conception that it is the death of this Worker and Teacher and Friend. It is communion with this entire Jesus Christ that saves; the concentration of heart and mind on this Person, drawing us by His teaching and working, and above all subduing us by His death on the Cross. The Cross indeed gathers together in one supreme act of sacrifice His teaching and His work; for it reveals, as nothing else can, the evil that lies slumbering, or (it may be) raging in the heart of each of us; and reveals still more the unsearchable love of God for us and the passion of Christ to redeem us. Our personality is liberated, elevated, purified, through contact and abiding communion with the Personality of Jesus Christ, through a deepening comprehension of His teaching, and increasing obedience to His purpose.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SOUL IN THE MASS-MOVEMENT OF A REVIVAL

AMONG the most remarkable facts in human history are the widespread movements of men towards some common end. These movements lay hold of whole communities, extend from one community to another until a whole nation is affected, and passing the boundaries of nations stir a continent to its depths. While the movement lasts, there will be in the minds of those who are influenced by it room for no other thought of importance; everything else is subordinate to and tested by the movement. Not only is the attention concentrated on it, but the natural instincts and affections tend to be overcome; reasoning, self-control, and the ordinary reticences of civilised life are discarded, and the one master emotion rules supreme. This is a well-known fact in Sociology, which takes many forms, and which in one form or another has been observed and described in all ages. We have had occasion

to refer to it from time to time already, and now we must deal with it as one of the great factors in religion. But to understand it fairly we must consider it in its simpler forms, and through them grasp if possible its principles as they develop and manifest themselves in passions and panics, or it may be in revivals that shake a generation.

## THE GROWTH OF A MASS-MOVEMENT

BEFORE consciousness dawns in a child it is already under the sway of family life. Sights and sounds have begun to tell; voices that are loud or soft, gracious actions or actions that are rough and coarse, violence or gentleness, smiles or frowns, have had some influence and will continue to have more. There is a fashion in the home which will be copied, and believed in perhaps through life. It may not be recognised as something peculiar to the family, it may never come into consciousness at all; but it will sway the child and youth, and form a part of the man's life to the grave. When the family has become conscious of itself and believes in itself, its honour is worked as an engine for the upbuilding of certain views and forms of behaviour; and when the family honour

In the Home.

has a foundation in its history, he will indeed be a man of strong individuality who will break away from its grasp.

In the School.

Carry this out into the school. The school as a 'mass' has a power of which very few take any account. And yet we all acknowledge in a half-humorous way that there is a school code of honour out of which it is exceedingly difficult to move any boy. He must obey the opinion of the school; the dissidence of dissent (Matthew Arnold must have been pleased to reflect), is not tolerated here. School honour has its forms of self-restraint, its heroisms, its persecutions, its cruelties, its little martyrdoms. We all know how it subdues the young savage, makes the timid brave to endure in silence, strengthens the weak, and stimulates the lethargic. But we know also how it arrests the independent, and may even crucify the good. What it may yet become as a potent force in the developing of the manhood and womanhood of the race, the imagination only can conceive. And the man who, after conceiving it in its width and depth, can organise it with a heart set on wisdom and righteousness will prove himself one of the greatest benefactors of his kind.

Outside the school there is another mass-

movement of a subtle kind that makes and unmakes many a young person; we mean the instinct to form clubs and coteries, little 'sets' of kindred spirits, 'gangs' that work together and think together and feel together, and therefore influence one another profoundly. What they can do in the way of mischief we see in the operation of the 'hooligan' or the Parisian 'apache.' What they can do in the way of good, we can see as clearly in the lads' and girls' clubs associated with almost every Christian congregation. Christian men and women have set themselves to capture the 'gang,' to bring the friends who have formed it under kindly influences, and to build up in them views of a worthy manhood and womanhood. Resting firmly and with clear conviction on the rise of the social feelings and impulses, they seek to direct them in the way of good. And they succeed.

In the Gang.

'They have proved masterly instruments for combating the worst evils in the crowded districts of great cities, and have given the "gang" spirit a healthy and helpful form of expression, furnishing as they do a natural outlet for the restlessness and enthusiasm of children and young people, within a healthy moral atmosphere.' [1]

[1] *Moral Education*, by E. H. Griggs. This subject is very

But the movement must be watched, for there are men looking at it with envious eyes, and ready to capture it, to switch it into other than moral issues.

In Mature Life.

We thus rise from the child and youth up into the full life of man as it is lived in the community and nation. And everywhere we find the same profound suggestive power of the mass. It is now the trades-union, or the social club, or the profession with its professionalism, or the civic community, or the Church, or the political party—each of them containing the possibilities of immense good or evil. We are in the hands of a power that, without our knowing it, is imposing on us thoughts and tendencies and habits, which may not be founded on reason.

'Everything we do reveals the pull on conduct exerted by social suggestion. Our foods and drinks, our dress and furniture, our amusements, our religious emotions, our investments, and even our matrimonial choices confess the sway of fashion and vogue. Whatever is common reaches us by way of example or advice or intimidation from a hundred directions. In our most private choices we are swerved from our orbit by the solar attraction —or repulsion—of the conventional. In public

fully treated by American writers, *e.g.* Stanley Hall, Coe in *Education in Religion and Morals.*

opinion there is something which is not praise or blame, and this residuum is mass suggestion. From this comes its power to reduce men to uniformity as a steam-roller reduces bits of stone to smooth macadam. Mr. Bryce has termed it "the fatalism of the multitude," and shown that it is something entirely different from the tyranny of the majority.' [1]

What we are now dealing with is the power of compelling men to obey, and to obey something of which they are not quite fully conscious. It enters into them and becomes part of an imperative that seems to reside in their nature. It is not the same as public opinion, or a social ideal, or a social valuation.

'A man bows to public opinion because he has come to dread it. He conforms to a social ideal because he has come to admire it. He adopts and acts on a ready-made social judgment because he has come to trust it. He obeys the social imperative, however, for none of these reasons, but because he feels he must. In the parlance of the day, he has become obsessed by it.' [2]

It is this social imperative working in the region of religion which we now propose to consider.

[1] Professor Ross on *Social Control*, p. 148. The chapter from which this is quoted is very suggestive. *Vide* also *The Psychology of Suggestion*, by Boris Sidis, Part iii., Society.

[2] Professor Ross, *Social Control*, p. 149.

## SOME HISTORIC MASS-MOVEMENTS

AS we are purposing to investigate the influence of the community upon the individual, it will be necessary to look at it in its operation on a large scale ; and the story of the Crusades, although very familiar, will afford us a good illustration. In the eleventh century it was counted highly meritorious for a Christian to visit the Holy Sepulchre; and many, both rich and poor, made the difficult and dangerous pilgrimage. But when the Turks took possession of Jerusalem they profaned the Christian sanctuaries, annoyed, robbed, and even killed the pilgrims. The news spread throughout Europe and awakened the deepest indignation. Peter the Hermit, returning from a visit he had made, told of the treatment Christian men were receiving at the hand of the unbelievers, and appealed for volunteers who would march to the Holy Land and save the honour of their Lord. Thousands offered themselves. Blessed by the Pope he mounted his ass, and with a great crucifix in his hand, and with bare head and feet, he passed through the Teutonic nations rousing them to the same fierce passion that consumed his own soul. No sins, he assured them, were too deep to

The Crusades.

be washed clean by the waters of Jordan, no crimes or iniquities were so heinous that they could not be atoned for by this glorious service done to Christ. He carried everything before him. At Clermont Pope Urban himself addressed the multitude, assured them the Turks were cowards, promised them success and remission of sins, and called on them to make this great venture; which was indeed no venture, seeing that, if they won, the Holy Sepulchre was theirs; if they died, eternal glory. The people cried as with one impassioned voice, 'It is the will of God, it is the will of God.' But the Hermit could not wait for the appointed day of starting, and led forth from their homes in different parts a throng of men, women, and children, numbering two hundred thousand. With hearts on fire, uncontrolled and uncontrollable, they robbed and massacred the Jews in the towns through which they passed, until the Emperor had to interfere for their protection. Every one of this vast multitude perished. Yet so overmastering had become the idea of rescuing the Holy Sepulchre from the unbeliever that within a century no fewer than four crusades were organised, only to encounter the same overwhelming disaster.

In 1212, after the failure of the fourth,

The Children's Crusade.

there was another, called the Children's Crusade, which brings out even more clearly the nature of this phenomenon of a mass-movement which we are studying. The failure of the fourth crusade, it was felt, must be due to the sins of the soldiers who had set God against them; success, therefore, they reasoned, would only be granted by heaven to the innocent; and who so innocent as the children? Babes would be victorious where strong men had been defeated. Under the leadership of Stephen, a shepherd boy of Cloyes, who preached among the pilgrims of St. Denys, a new enthusiasm was awakened. He became the rage of the day. Pilgrims flocked to hear him; children of ten, and some even of eight, became prophets too, preaching among their playmates the call of God, and collecting groups of them from all the neighbouring villages to join the ranks of their leader. Experienced men knew what unspeakable misery this betokened, and forbade it, but in vain; old pilgrims were alarmed at the folly, parents in their agony locked their children in their rooms. But the mania spread, affecting the girls as well as the boys.

'Bolts and bars would not hold them. If shut up they broke through doors and windows, and

rushed, deaf to appeals of mothers and fathers, to take their places in the processions which they saw passing by, whose crosses and banners, whose censers, songs, and shouts, and paraphernalia seemed, like the winds of torrid climates, to bear resistless infection. If the children were forcibly held and confined so that escape was impossible, they wept and mourned and at last pined, as if the receding sounds carried away their hearts and their strength. It was necessary to release them ; and forgetting to say farewell, they ran to enlist in those deluded throngs that knew not whither they went.' [1]

A similar mass of children, to the number of twenty thousand, was at the same time being gathered in Northern Germany by Nicolas, a boy of ten.

' Parents, friends, and pastors sought to restrain them by force or appeal, but they whose hearts were set upon the enterprise mourned and pined so that, we are told, their lives were frequently endangered as by disease, and it was necessary to allow them to depart.'

The decree of the King could not check this mania ; nor fear nor force nor all the entreaties of affection could turn the children back. The Pope was able to persuade one stream of them to turn home again from

[1] Boris Sidis, *The Psychology of Suggestion*, pp. 323-325.

Rome. They died in hundreds; they were stolen; they were cajoled by seeming friends to take ship for Palestine and were steered instead to slave-markets where the boys were sold to cruelty and the girls to infamy.

We are proposing to discover what a mass-movement of this kind means in its action on the individual soul, but before we do so we shall observe it again operating in other directions. In Taranto in Southern Italy during the Middle Ages a remarkable epidemic of this kind broke out and spread abroad. There is in the district a spider called the tarantula, whose bite although painful is in no way dangerous; but the people of the time believed it to be deadly, and that the poison in the system of the sufferer could be gradually eliminated by dancing. The result of this belief was that 'the bite of the spider threw the sufferer into a depressed state of melancholy, accompanied by various nervous disorders. The condition was accompanied by an increased susceptibility to the power of music.'[1] By means of music only could the sufferer be roused from the lethargy into which he fell; but by means of it he was roused and began to move rhythmically, then

The Tarantella.

[1] *Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v.*

to dance with increasing rapidity until he fell to the ground exhausted.

'The dancing became contagious: one person caught it from another quite independently of the bite of the tarantula, and in this way whole districts became affected. It spread gradually throughout Italy. It affected not only inhabitants of the country, but foreigners visiting it; age appears to have had no saving influence; children and old people alike commenced dancing at the sound of the tarantella, but as a rule women were more susceptible than men.'

We shall see immediately how significant all this is. But as a final illustration take this from the French Revolution. There has always been a tendency to identify Christianity with the Church which represents it in the land, and to suppose that the corruptions of Churchmen are an inherent part of the religion which they profess. Thus, before the French Revolution and during it, the enmity of many men to the priests and the methods of the Roman Catholic Church developed into an enmity to the Christian religion, and to all religion whatever.[1] But much more than that, and what makes any reference to it relevant to our present study, this opposition to religion in France was no

A Fanaticism of Irreligion.

[1] De Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Regime et la Revolution*, ch. ii.

mere shedding of it as something superfluous or outworn; it became a passion, a wild enthusiasm that spread over the country as fire in a prairie. Irreligion became a religion, a fanaticism as fierce and destructive as any fanaticism the world has seen. The Church in France was not worse than the Church in other lands, rather it was better; but in the public mind it was identified with a system which for the sake of the welfare of men must (so they believed) be overthrown. The passion of unbelief passed from man to man, from the educated classes to the uneducated, from brilliant writers to those who could neither read their books nor appreciate them. The movement reached America, and to such an extent had unbelief become the accepted and natural view of the time that the students of Yale University assumed the names of the leading French opponents of Christianity.

Mental Contagion.

These are but a few of the hundreds of mass-movements that may be found in the history of the progress of the race; and they are quoted now that we may recognise certain elements that are common to all mass-movements, certain psychological laws (as we may perhaps describe them) which may be discovered by reflection. It is true that Max Nordau and others deny that there

is any such thing as a psychology of a mass or crowd or group. He contends that—

'A number of men living together under the same or similar conditions are no more one living unity, one living being, in the sense in which St. Augustine, Pascal, Auguste Comte use the word, than a number of locomotives collected in an engineering shop are one single locomotive. Human events,' he proceeds, 'are the outcome of individual human activity, the reaction of individuals upon circumstances originating in nature and the activity of other human beings; they are only explicable by a consideration of individual qualities. Every mass movement, be it a war, a rebellion, a crusade, a migration, a pilgrimage, is the outcome of the actions of individual men, concerted for that purpose, but capable of being regarded and estimated apart.' [1]

This is only partly true, and it remains incontestable that men do things under the sway of a mass which they would not do alone, and of which they are profoundly ashamed when alone again, or reach out (as we shall see immediately) to a height which they have struggled in vain to reach in solitude.

We observe then in studying the action of a mass of men [2] that they possess something

[1] *The Interpretation of History*, by Max Nordau, p. 102.

[2] Vide *The Psychology of the Crowd*, by Gustave le Bon;

A Faith or Feeling in common.

in common—a common belief, a common purpose, or a common emotion. In this sense a 'multitude' is not a psychologic mass, not even a multitude of men who are fellow-citizens, and who, of course, have very much in common. Before a multitude becomes a psychologic mass the something in common must be swaying them. They may have come together in mere idleness; and yet a speaker, or an event, may call forth from their subconsciousness a common fear, or hope, or indignation, or confession, that will sweep them into collective action. This Peter the Hermit did. By his emaciated, ungainly figure, by his story of the pilgrims' sufferings, by his impassioned appeals on behalf of the honour of Christ, he transformed the multitude into a psychologic mass, and hurried men into unspeakable hardships and untimely graves. This in like manner St. Bernard did; so again did Pope Urban; so too did the peasant boys, and all the rest of them. A passion massed them, making them one—one in emotion, one in purpose, in readiness to suffer and die. A common emotion so unites men that at once they become highly

*Quelques Réflections sur la Psychologie des Réveils*, by Henri Bois; *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals*, by F. M. Davenport, ch. iii; *Social Psychology*, by Professor E. A. Ross, chh. iii., iv.

suggestible. Reasoning is inhibited, and some primitive instinct or passion takes possession of them and carries them along. Then again we observe about a mass-movement that the longer it lasts, the wider and the deeper it goes. Within the sphere of its influence few will be strong enough to resist it; even the best minds give way almost against their wills. The very presence of the movement fixes the attention, absorbs it, to the inhibiting of all contrariant thoughts; and this altogether apart from what the reason might have had to say in a calm collected moment. The only security is to be above the storm circle. From time to time we have had to refer to Imitation. Imitation, but it is never more manifest than in a movement of this kind. In a mass-movement there is to all appearance only one subject that interests the majority of men; they help to concentrate one another's thoughts on it, to awaken or deepen one another's anxieties concerning it or delight in it. They can hardly attend to their business or their homes; they can read books or papers only that treat of this; they count conversation on any other topic as trifling with the issues of life. Now, in a crowd there is an irresistible tendency towards the imitation not only of prevailing physical

movements, but also of thoughts and emotions. As men laugh in company and weep in company, only dimly discerning a reason for either, so will they run without knowing why, sometimes from danger, sometimes into danger. If men have a leader they believe in, and get a powerful lead, they will reach out far beyond their own thoughts, and far beyond their past achievements. There are other interesting facts concerning mass-movements, but this one alone may be mentioned in conclusion; the strong emotion that is evoked at first, and that increases as the movement develops, may take a course that is absolutely beyond calculation, leading to issues that startle humanity as in the French Revolution. The appeal to men in a mass is always to something primitive, to some of the more elementary and instinctive of our qualities. But when an instinct is evoked towards one object or end, the emotion tends to spread into other departments of the mental life, to flood (if one may be allowed the figure) some quiescent tendency, some subconscious appetency, to bring it into full activity and bear the crowd away to deeds undreamt of, whether good or evil. It is a stupendous power, but incalculable, and, when in full swing, ungovernable.

## SOME HISTORIC REVIVALS

IN passing on to the consideration of some of the great revivals [1] in modern times, it may not be without its use to say that the reason for placing them alongside of those mass-movements we have just described is that we may the better separate what is purely human from what is divine. It is easy to mistake the outward and imperfect expression of a spiritual movement for the spiritual movement itself. One cannot read the story of the great revivals of earlier and later times without being profoundly moved, but the clear perception of what in them was purely contagious will not lessen our gratitude that so many thousands found there their deliverance from sin.

Under Jonathan Edwards.

Let us take the revival which began under the ministry of Jonathan Edwards, and which was guided, defended, described and analysed

[1] The literature concerning revivals is very large, but much of it is not of high value for the purpose of this study. Recently, however, men have begun to see that close observation of *all* the facts and the complete narration of them is of greater use even for practical purposes than the suppression of anything. The narrative of Jonathan Edwards' work is invaluable to-day, whereas that of the Welsh revival given for homiletic purposes has already ceased to be of worth to the historian. But the books of Professor Bois and of Professor Rogues de Fursac on the same are of permanent value.

by him with such masterly insight.[1] In the year 1735 he was the minister of Northampton in New England. For a year or so before, there had been evidences of increasing seriousness in the minds of the people, so that he found it possible to rebuke them for their frivolity on Sunday evenings, and to introduce the custom of holding social gatherings of a religious character. At the same time he began the preaching of those sermons which have made him famous. The conversion of a young woman who had been a leader among the frivolous so impressed her companions and the community generally that their attention was directed sharply and powerfully to religion. It soon became the main subject of conversation; business was a distraction, the ordinary duties of the day were in danger of being neglected; there was scarcely a person in the town, old or young, who was not impressed, or who was not eager to attend the meetings held either in church or in private houses. Edwards was a powerful preacher, but unimpassioned. Tall, pale, young, with penetrating eyes, he read those terrible sermons of his in a quiet, serious way,

[1] The works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. i., Introductory Memoir, *Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in New England*, *vide* also Allan's *Life of Edwards*.

hardly lifting his glance from his paper, or if he did for a moment, fixing it on a corner of the building. And this was what he preached about: Sinners in the hands of an angry God, The Eternity of Hell Torments, Wrath upon the wicked to the Uttermost, The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners, The Torments of the Wicked in Hell no occasion of Grief to the Saints in Heaven, Wicked men useful only in their Destruction. On one occasion a congregation of sturdy farmers with their families had driven in from a distance to hear him preach. We may well believe that the very quietness and self-restraint of his manner only made his awful message more awful still. They were stricken to the heart, crying aloud for mercy in such agony that the preacher could not be heard, and clutching convulsively at the benches to keep themselves from sliding into the pit. Men and women in their alarm fainted and fell to the ground unconscious, where they lay while the chapel resounded with their anguished cries. The movement spread through New England and the other colonies of America, passed to Scotland awakening Cambuslang and Kilsyth, roused John Wesley as he read Edwards' account of it in 1738 during a walk between London and

Oxford. But in New England as it spread it changed in character, until men trusted in the manifestations and ' bodily effects ' rather than in spiritual-mindedness, and until mere extravagances and anarchy threatened the very existence of the Church. Edwards rose to the full height of his power as he defended the work as a work of God against opponents, rebuked the errors of the revival, and moderated the temper of its friends.

In Kentucky.

Before we discuss this, however, let us look for a moment at the revival in Kentucky.[1] After the Great Awakening in Edwards' time, the Church in America seems to have sunk exhausted into lethargy. Of all the God-forsaken settlements in the Southern States none was so forsaken as Logan County in Kentucky. It lay in the extreme backwoods of the time, to which only brave men with their lives in their hands could have penetrated. The best of them were of a Scoto-Irish breed who had been living in Virginia and had migrated westward; but as the district was fertile and promising, men of the most abandoned character had settled

[1] Davenport's *Primitive Traits*, Boris Sidis' *Psychology of Suggestion*; but above all, the delightful and quaint narrative of Peter Cartwright, *The Backwoods Preacher*.

there. It was called the Rogues' Harbour, for in the words of Peter Cartwright—

'Refugees from almost all parts of the Union fled to escape justice or punishment. Although there was law, it could not be executed; and it was a desperate state of Society. Murderers, horse-thieves, highway-robbers and counterfeiters fled here until they combined and actually formed a majority. The honest and civil part of the citizens would prosecute these wretched banditti, but they would swear each other clear; and they really put all law at defiance, and carried on such desperate violence and outrage, that the honest part of the citizens seemed to be driven to the necessity of uniting and combining together and taking the law into their own hands under the names of Regulators. This was a very desperate state of things.' [1]

Well, it was in this community that the great Kentucky revival broke out. We can appreciate in some measure the condition of affairs. Liable to attacks from the Indians round them, and from the scoundrels in the midst of them, men had developed a tendency to impulsive action, and swift defence against sudden alarms; thought meant deeds with them, for there was no time to deliberate, and self-control might involve death. They were far away from any church and the

[1] Cartwright, p. 5.

softening, restraining influences of religion. Still religion was kept aflame by the piety of many of their women and by prayer meetings held in some of their homes. The great majority of them, however, were careless when not bad; when bad they were ruffians. Think what would be likely to rouse such a community to the fear of God; think also how they would act under powerful preaching that roused them.

How it began.

In 1796 the Rev. James M'Gready was invited to Logan County—the very man for scoundrels, strong, fierce, with a thunderous voice and terribly in earnest.[1] He shook them, old and young, into terror and into tears, until the one subject of conversation among them was the welfare of their souls. The tidings spread slowly over the country, and in 1799 two brothers, named M'Gee, one a Presbyterian minister and the other a Methodist preacher, travelling north, turned aside to see M'Gready's strange work in Logan County. They saw and took part in a great sacramental service. At the close the people seemed unwilling to leave the church, and the brothers remained to address them.

'There was a solemn weeping all over the house,' wrote John M'Gee, describing the effect of his

[1] Davenport, ch. vi.

brother's sermon. 'At length I rose up and exhorted them to let the Lord God Omnipotent reign in their hearts, and submit to Him, and their souls should live. Many broke silence. A woman in the east end of the house shouted tremendously. I left the pulpit and went through the audience shouting and exhorting with all possible ecstasy and energy; and the floor was soon covered with the slain.'

The people who were present at this service and had experienced this awakening went home with their hearts burning within them to tell what they had seen, and communicate the gift to their friends. Very soon the whole state was in commotion. From distances of forty, fifty, and even a hundred miles men travelled to the first camp-meeting at the Gasper River in the summer of 1800. They brought their wives and children in covered waggons, with food and bedding. The church was much too small to hold them, and the men therefore made a clearing in the forest, laying the great trees in rows to serve as benches. And there they stayed from Friday to Tuesday, preaching, praying, singing, almost without intermission, and at last on Saturday evening giving way in hundreds to excitement and prostration. After this camp-meetings became common, the most extra-

The First 'Camp-Meeting.'

ordinary being that held at Cane Ridge in August 1801. A military officer computed there were twenty thousand present.

'The remembrance of that fateful gathering lingers in Kentucky after the lapse of a century. Nothing was lacking to stir to their profoundest depths the imagination and emotion of this great throng of men, women and children. It was at night that the most terrible scenes were witnessed, when the camp-fires blazed in a mighty circle around the vast audience of pioneers bowed in devotion. Beyond, was the blackness of the primeval forest; above, the night wind and the foliage and the stars. As the darkness deepened, the exhortations of the preachers became more fervent and impassioned; their picturesque prophecies of doom more lurid and alarming; the volume of song burst all bonds of guidance and control, and broke again and again from the throats of the people; while over all, at intervals, there rang out the shout of ecstasy, the sob and the groan.'[1]

This whole assembly seemed to be carried into the wildest excitement, singing, laughing, leaping, sobbing, shouting, swooning. Three thousand of them are said to have fallen, and those who fell were carried into the church, the floor of which was never less than half covered.

[1] Davenport, p. 75.

'Some lay quiet, unable to move or speak. Some talked, but could not move. Some beat the floor with their heels. Some, shrieking in agony, bounded about like live fish out of the water. Many lay down and rolled over and over for hours at a time. Others rushed wildly over the stumps and benches, and then plunged into the forest shouting, "Lost! Lost!"'

There broke out on them also another symptom which specially marked the Kentucky revival — a convulsive movement of the head from side to side, which was called 'jerks.' This movement was sometimes so rapid that the features of the face could not be distinguished. It became highly contagious, attacking even opponents, and doubters, and scoffers. No one could resist it, whatever his age or colour or character might be; 'only,' writes a witness, 'only those who wished to philosophise upon it and the most godly escaped it. The wicked are more afraid of it than of small-pox or yellow fever.' 'Jerks.'

These were the outward manifestations of a great work, the blessings of which were wide-spread and incalculable and permanent. It overflowed into Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, North Carolina. It reformed and civilised some of the wildest districts of America. Careless men and women were made earnest-

minded, the bonds of evil that held thousands were broken, the abandoned were purified, and ruffians were tamed; places where there was no safety for life or goods became the happy homes of Christian men and women. It was in this wild country and amid these extravagances of the Kentucky revival that the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was born.

### THE FEATURES COMMON TO REVIVALS

INNUMERABLE illustrations of the extraordinary and salutary power of revivals from earlier and from more recent history might be given, but these will be sufficient for our purpose. To begin with then: as we have seen, men can be stirred in this way in a revival only when they hold the same (it may be) elementary religious beliefs, occupy some *common* moral or spiritual ground, possess consciously or subconsciously something in which they agree. They may not be aware of this, they may even deny it, for they will belong to different churches, Presbyterian, Congregational, Wesleyan, Baptist or Episcopalian; they may differ widely in doctrinal belief; they may be poles asunder in their moral conduct. From these points of view the multitude may be heterogeneous, and far

An Elementary Belief.

enough from forming a psychologic 'mass.' But deeper than all these differences, there must be a ground of primary conviction that is common to them, some fear or hope or desire which they all share.[1] That common ground—faith we may even call it—is perhaps rudimentary enough. It may have been implanted in their early years, and may be nothing more than dim impressions of a mother's life or teaching, or some experience which they passed through in childhood or youth. A subconscious element there must be before we get a 'mass' of the kind we are describing. And it is got in this way. The environment, the singing and prayers and Scripture reading draw the attention away from the engrossing thought of their ordinary work or their besetting sin. The multitude itself and the expectation of something un-

[1] The importance of dealing with the 'fundamentals' in all religious awakenings is well known and insisted on by all scientific writers on the subject. A living evangelist who has had great success said to one who was asking about his methods, 'For one thing my theology is their theology; it is the theology of the Shorter Catechism which they learned in their youth.' The introduction of theory and the discussion of difficult or subtle questions is fatal to this kind of work whatever value it may have to the student. As Wordsworth might have said, to botanise on a mother's grave is not very helpful to devotion for her; as a psychologist might say, a cognitive interest inhibits an interest in the object itself. Knowing about a man is not knowing *him*.

defined produce mental tension; a thousand thoughts are hurrying through the mind as the speaker proceeds with his address; memories of youth are emerging in the quiet. A skilful speaker can make sure that in the hearts of most he will touch some chord that will vibrate into a suggestion of a happy past, or that will awaken a sense of sin, or a fear of the judgment, or a determination to make the future worthy of a man. By touching that chord he transforms the multitude into a psychologic unity. At first sight this statement may seem to require qualification, because sceptics, scoffers, and even open enemies are sometimes converted in a revival. But a more careful examination of those cases that are given in detail shows that in the mind of the sceptic who is converted there was some unrest, some dissatisfaction with the position he held. Get a sceptic who has been trained in scepticism, who has based it on investigation and deliberate thought, and you will find that if you mean to convert him you must apply a totally different method from the suggestive power of a revival meeting. Mr. Evan Roberts tried in one of his meetings to overwhelm an avowed atheist —and failed. And that for a simple reason. He was bringing to bear upon the atheist's

'Suggestion.'

conviction a mass-conviction and mass-emotion which the atheist despised; while the atheist in his own mind was surrounded, supported, and elated by a cloud of witnesses —his unbelieving companions, the unbelieving writers, scientists and philosophers of all ages—who, in his opinion, were the élite of the world; was counting himself a witness for truth, science, philosophy and history, and at the same moment counting the congregation who were praying for him good people, but unenlightened. On the other hand, if you destroy this common conviction of a God, of sin and judgment in the minds of the young of a nation, or starve it until it withers, then indeed you make all preaching of salvation unintelligible to adults. To this Dr. Rogues de Fursac bears his testimony. As an expert in neurology, he came to Wales during the revival that he might see for himself and investigate the facts. The origin of the revival and the possibility of it, he says, are due to the early training of the Welsh in the Christian religion—in their homes, their day-schools and Sunday-schools.[1] He adds:— Religious Education.

'It is in the mind of the child that impressions are engraved which later take shape in the person-

[1] Professor J. Rogues de Fursac, in *Revue Philosophique*, May 1907, p. 525; *Un Mouvement Mystique*, by the same author.

ality of the man ! This personality in the course of life will perhaps undergo some superficial and passing modifications. But unless circumstances are very unfavourable, the essential features will remain, and the image obliterated for a moment will reappear with all its primitive features. This is so true that at all times and especially in our own, a fierce struggle is maintained among religious and philosophic doctrines of every kind for the purpose of gaining power and keeping it over the children. They are right. The teaching that knows how to capture the child will have the man. The transformations that appear to-day in French society are a proof of it.' Then he utters these significant words : ' Out of our schools, which are called godless, has gone forth a generation of free-thinkers.'

So much for the mass unity of the gathering.

Now the first and most apparent characteristic of such a psychologic ' mass ' is its high suggestibility. When appeals are made to the more elementary religious thoughts, especially when they are made to religious fears of death, judgment, and eternal punishment, the whole multitude is impressed. If these appeals are made by strong and forceful and deeply convinced personalities, or by skilful orators, thousands may be shaken to the very foundations of their being. The weaker men and women, the more impulsive

or emotional, will cry out, or weep, or tremble, answering as if mechanically to the changing mood or intention of the speaker. And the stronger follow by suggestion.

We shall understand how highly suggestible this mass must be when we consider who they are and what has brought them together. In it there is a very large number of religious and deeply religious people, who are present for the sake of helping their less fortunate fellow-men, and who will therefore maintain the fervour of the meeting at a high pitch, and by prayer and ejaculations keep pressing it higher; there are others who have come desiring to get help—the doubting, the unassured—souls that are feeling after God, seeking and longing for rest; there are others again who have come half in hope that salvation may find them, and half in fear lest they should be led to make any 'scene' that others would talk about; some, on the other hand, have come who are still under the bondage of a great sin from which they have struggled to escape but cannot; others are quite careless, or only moved by curiosity, or are strongly opposed and critical, or are philosophic in their bent and have come to observe and understand. But all these classes, except the last, are more or less highly sug-

A 'Suggestible' Audience.

gestible, for they have their attention concentrated on the movement, on the speaker and his words, on the audience and their emotion; not on the *process* (as is the case with the scientific observer) which arrests emotion. The practised evangelist can handle a great 'mass'—the greater the better; he reasons with them, pleads with them, mourns over them, rejoices with them, denounces them, offers them life eternal, fears lest they should lose it. His voice is continually changing, tender, loud, now at ease, now urgent and compelling. He is at one moment imaginative, at another piling up proofs from Scripture, at still another explanatory. In other words he is an orator; and with the gifts of an orator he gets 'within the guard' of almost every one, and pierces them. He brings them to decision. But this has not been done by the evangelist alone; a much greater force than his has been at work, a force which began to tell on the convert when he first heard the rumour of the revival, which has been closing in on him day by day as he heard men talk of it, has drawn him to the meeting, caught at his heart when his neighbour sobbed or sang with choking voice, brought tears to his eyes as some one confessed the very sins of which he himself had

been guilty, made him pray for deliverance when he heard a comrade of his own tell how to-night he had found peace in Christ. He cannot forget the meeting; the memory of it follows him, haunts him, sits down with him, walks at his side. It is the words of the preacher he hears; but it is the mass-meeting that takes up the words and forces them upon his heart—the singing, the praying, the cries and tears, the joy and the peace. That is his mental world, and for a time it seems to him as if the whole universe of God, men and books and events, were combining with his conscience and the 'crowd' to force him into this highest and noblest surrender of himself.

To this suggestibility of the 'mass' are due those manifestations, those 'bodily effects,' as Jonathan Edwards describes them, which in many minds are the main characteristics of a revival. They are the physiological expression of an emotion, and are nothing more. Of course every emotion seeks its expression, but the expression will depend on the culture of the man, on his nervous stability, on his temporary environment.[1] 'Bodily Effects.'

[1] As an extreme illustration of the power of the environment on those who are under the sway of a movement, may be taken the confession of sin as it manifested itself in the Manchurian revival. The fact that one man could not sleep because he had not publicly confessed all his sins, but was under the necessity of

Whether he will weep, or cry aloud, or have jerks, will depend not on his spiritual nature, but on his physical; not on the presence of God in him whether converting or enlightening him, but wholly on the condition of his nerves and his control over them. Certainly, to maintain control over them is almost impossible to one who is in the swim of the movement, whose attention is fixed on the speaker's thought and the people's emotion; but the loss of control will be due not to the truth he hears, but to the power of the mass that surrounds him. Jonathan Edwards was slowly driven to oppose all these manifestations. The religion of Christ is a spiritual religion, and its true manifestations are spiritual only; to seek for 'bodily effects,' for 'impulses and impressions,' he believed to be a falling away from the high privilege and glory of the true faith. He looked forward to the time when 'all extraordinary gifts shall have ceased and vanished away.'

Jonathan Edwards' Conclusion.

'For my part,' he says, 'I had rather enjoy the sweet influences of the Spirit, showing Christ's

returning to the meeting that he might do so, is a fine proof of the force of the mass. The present writer knew a young woman who felt she had denied her Lord because she had not at the bidding of the preacher stood up in the meeting to confess Him —a new sin.

spiritual, divine beauty, infinite grace, and dying love, sweet complacence, and humble joy in God, one quarter of an hour, than to have prophetical visions and revelations the whole year.'

Surely, the outcropping even in our time of a desire for signs and wonders, tongues and healings and miracles, the belief in them, the subdued language when they appear, are due to a materialising of spiritual religion. The true manifestation of the Spirit is love for God and man ; its outpouring is an outpouring of love, and its progress is the broadening of love. As it broadens it will touch races less highly developed ; and there again these earlier manifestations according to their stage of culture will be seen, which will surprise Christian men in highly advanced nations, making some of them wish for such manifestations among themselves. But that would only be a return to a primitive culture. The words of Edwards spoken in the throng and the pressure of events, and the teaching of the events, will remind us that we Westerns need love and not the gift of tongues, a faith in the spirit and methods of Christ, and not in the movements and methods of a psychologic 'mass' in the full sweep of its emotion.

### THE VALUE OF MASS-MOVEMENTS

IN considering the value of revivals in the working of the great Christian campaign, we must first of all recognise that the 'psychologic-mass' and the 'mass-movement' are facts in human life. We must acknowledge this movement like every other, try to understand it, and if possible use it for the highest ends. That it can be used and used wisely has been abundantly proved in the history of the Church; that it can run into extravagance, become uncontrollable and mischievous, and leave a community exhausted and sceptical is also undeniable. After all it remains a fact which must be taken into account. Let us then take our stand in a Christian community and in a Christian home.

It has been well said that 'Heredity does not stop with birth; it is then only beginning.'[1] We are all from birth enswathed in the long results of the world's education, and in the Christian family enswathed with the rich inheritance of all the saints of Christ. 'The first noose thrown over the neck,' says Professor Ross, 'is example.' And day by day something is said to us or done before us which calls on us to follow what is good and

Christ in the Home.

[1] Ross, *Social Control*, pp. 154, 163.

kind and worthy. The very expectation that we shall rise to our best, the belief in us which so often shames us into being better than we had ever meant to be—these and a hundred other things are shaping our lives for good. It has been told of Dr. Jelf, as also of Arnold of Rugby, that he was a man incapable of supposing that any one could lie to him. 'It was an accepted maxim that no one could lie to the Principal, because he always believed what was said. . . . After a few months at the College, every student, finding that he was treated as a gentleman, acted up to the gentleman's code of honour.' Add to all this the fact that every day entrance is found for thoughts and feelings of the most varied and subtle kind through the reading of books and papers. Stories we read of every kind, written by men of very different conceptions of what a man's life should be. Ideals are slowly formed within the mind of what we might make our future, and little plans are made of what we shall do in order to reach it. At eye and ear these suggestions are pouring themselves perpetually into the soul, and leaving permanent traces there. The critical moments are met and the critical steps are taken without any one knowing, silently and often with little emotion. How happy

the souls are that pass thus sweetly into the life of Christ! Yet this has been a mass-movement, the action of a 'psychologic-mass' on the young soul. It is the action of all the Christian generations, the gentle pressure of the lives not only of their parents and friends and teachers, but of Christ, and Paul, and Augustine, and Luther, and Calvin, and Knox; of all the saints whose lives have enriched the thought of the Church, and of all the writers whose works still lift men into the presence of God.

Now, these are the results of mass-movements acting on the souls of the young, and we cannot but ask whether it is not really possible for this deep and subtle power to continue its action for good through their maturer years. Surely there is another and finer 'revival' than that which finds its expression in physiological and emotional contagion. We believe there is, and that a mass-movement in behalf of religion can be brought to bear upon men with a steady pressure, like that of public opinion, and with an imperative like that of social control. We do not need to discount the value of an emotional meeting; we certainly cannot ignore it. There are men and women who are held back from decision for God through the power of a

worldly public opinion in which they live and from which they do not have native force enough to break away; or they are shut up within the narrow and putrid lagoon of some vice, and notwithstanding their conviction of sin and resolution to be done with it, have not the volitional force to escape into the open sea. Men such as these are carried over this 'bar' by the great wave of religious emotion that swells and surges in a revival meeting. When they are once over the bar, they are safe. Nevertheless, for the multitudes this is a method less accessible and perhaps less sure than the quiet, steady, strong, and subtle pressure of a great Christian public opinion and social control. Across the Bar.

And the suggestion comes through the presence in the community of the Christian Church. Here we wish to speak of it not as an educative but as a suggestive power. In the Church we have men massed together in one corporation and brotherhood for the worship of the Eternal God; and even the disinterested observer will surely see gathered there the most saintly and the most consecrated lives; he will discern the spirit it breathes, the character it fashions, the hope it entertains for men, the appeal it makes to all to enter into the fellowship of the higher The Church.

life, and thus hasten the coming of the kingdom of God. It bears witness to a world that is both present and unseen, and into which every one can enter now, and to spiritual ends which the very lowliest can further. If Christian men could dwell together in unity, thinking of what is common to them in the faith and not of what divides them, finding their vocation and their delight in propagating the spirit of their Master, then the Church would impose itself upon the mind as the nation does, becoming a standard of conduct, a check on every evil, and a stimulus to a wider good. It is pervasive, for it is acting on the whole life without our always being conscious of it; it is continuous, working not by fits and starts but steadily through the years. And because it is so, it assumes the power of an imperative from which only the very strongest can break away. This we see from the case of Luther. When he had to face the Church, it was false and unchristian, and he was speaking out for the truth of Christ; yet so mighty was its power that he dared hardly believe that he could be right and the Church wrong.

The case of Luther, however, brings out clearly the very dangers against which we must always be on our guard in matters of

'suggestion.' The community, even the Christian community, may by its very strength arrest the movements of the soul; and, further, the Church bearing the name of Christ may become the enemy of all that Christ holds dear. All 'mass-movements,' be they in large and enthusiastic meetings or in the hidden life of a community, tend to arrest thought. Strong emotion inhibits reason. It is therefore necessary that the other great function of the Church, teaching, be maintained in its fullest strength. The only security against the extravagances and fanaticism of a revival movement is the enlightening of the mind in the knowledge of Biblical truth. Without this enlightening of Bible truth as its foundation, a revival is a risk; without doctrine as its body and essence, it may lead to error; without doctrine as its immediate sequence, the good results will be evanescent. The 'mass' must be changed into a society, revivalism must become a church, with a church's order, sobriety, and its firm and confident resting on truth. Then, indeed, there will be no longer any need for excitement and emotional storm; there will rather be a slow but sure ripening of the soul in the warmth of God's love. Notwithstanding, there will be crises in the

The Necessity of Doctrine.

life, sudden leaps into fuller light, days of darkness or doubt or declension; the dispelling of mists and clouds, and the coming again of joy and peace. They come when we return to the first truths of our religion, to the simple elements in which all revival preaching deals so largely. It is these simple truths that convert the unbeliever, and that heal the wounded spirit of the believer—the love and care of God for His children, the pardon of sin to those who cast themselves upon His mercy, the presence of His Spirit in the heart of His children. The unconscious but underlying thought of revivalism is that the peculiar channel by which the Holy Spirit finds access to the human soul is high-strung emotion. But the reason and the will, though they come later into full play, are as sacred as the feelings and often more reliable. And that love, whose very nature God Himself is, arises as certainly out of the reason and the will as out of the feelings. The love which God manifested in Christ was seen in service and sacrifice; the love which was the very breath of Christ's life was felt in humility, self-control, patience, surrender of Himself for the good of others; the love we are called on to offer in return for His is a love that suffers long and is kind, that makes

us ashamed that we should pain and dishonour Him Who has done and borne so much for our sakes. And that love may grow until it masters the whole being without an emotional storm.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CAPTURE OF THE SOUL BY GOD

WE have hitherto been speaking of religion as a human experience, and have been trying to follow what takes place within the mind of man. We have seen how profound the changes are that can be worked there, how a man can be delivered from the dominion of the grossest of vices and lifted into the noblest of services for his fellow-men. Has it all taken place within what we may call the limits of the natural world, or has there been in it anything that is divine? Is it the result of a man's own moral power, or of the power of God? Now, every one who is a Christian will maintain that religion is something more than a human experience; it is a relationship with God in which God Himself must take part. It could not be religion in the personal sense of the word without the surest conviction that God was in it, and in it also in the deepest and most intimate way. And this

conviction is not merely that there is a God about whom we may reason, and by whose creative action we may explain the world, but a conviction that God is interested in us, and is in touch with our spirits every hour of the day. Religion then is a human experience in which God of His own motion takes part. Our problem now is: What is the part which God takes, and what is man's ?

### WHAT IS GOD'S PART, AND WHAT IS MAN'S ?

THIS problem is one of the most difficult that men have ever set themselves to solve. It is one too which is continually emerging in the course of human thought, which men apparently cannot leave alone, and which separates them sharply into opposing camps, rendering them almost intolerant of one another. Two great answers have been given which in their extreme statement are directly contradictory of one another, but modifications of which are continually proposed. Attempts are in this way made to determine the shares respectively of divine and human agency in the salvation of the soul. The problem seems insoluble, and Dr. Rainy warns us wisely against supposing that we can reach a final solution.

Dr. Rainy's Warning.

'All efforts to divide the ground between God and man,' he says, 'go astray. In the inward process of salvation, and especially in this willing and doing, God does all, and also man does all. But God takes precedence. For it is He that quickeneth the dead, and calleth things that are not as though they were. Here we say, as the Apostle does in another case, This is a great mystery. Let us recognise it as a mystery bound up with any hope we ourselves have of proving to be children of God. And under the sense of it, with fear and trembling, let us work, for it is God that worketh in us both to will and do.' Dr. Rainy goes on: 'When I trace back any of my actions to the fountain where it takes its rise *as mine*, I find that fountain in my will. The materials which I take up into my act, the impressions which gather together to create a situation for me, may all have their separate history going back in the order of cause and effect to the beginning of the world; but that which makes it mine is that *I will*, *I choose*, and thereupon I do it.'[1]

Bearing this warning in mind, let us for a moment turn to the consideration of the two great answers our problem has received.

The Pelagian Answer.

The first is that which is known as Pelagianism, according to which the spiritual life of a man is the direct result of his own choice.[2]

[1] *The Epistle to the Philippians* (Expositor's Bible), ch. viii.

[2] We have not thought it necessary to give references to this famous controversy in any of its forms.

Character, in all its height and depth, in all its glory on the one hand and its utter degradation on the other, is his own work. He chooses the life he likes, builds it up, act upon act and day after day. No force is at any moment or in any way applied to him ; he himself does it, and he does it all. Otherwise no responsibility and no blame would attach to him. He is at every moment free to act, equally free in his first choice and in his latest. He is good or bad, saint or devil, in the eyes of God and men, just because he has always been free. By his own will he fashions himself for an eternity of weal or woe. Now, at the present day men are strongly tempted to accept this solution of the problem. They are strongly tempted through the sense of power that comes to them in the perception of the wonders that have been achieved through sheer force of will. Modern civilisation in all its vast range has been deliberately built up by men of determination. Their success in every department of life has been the result of strenuousness of effort and labour. They simply would not accept defeat. And victory comes as a matter of fact to those who are resolved, and to none other. Life, we are reminded, is unending struggle, and the weak in will first fail and then perish.

In every field of man's work illustrations are supplied, in trade, in science, in adventure. By this determination not to submit to defeat even at the hands of Nature, men have been able to subdue the most mysterious and devastating plagues, and will yet be able to master the air. There is something stimulating to the will in the contemplation of all this; we instinctively admire and honour the man of this heroic type, and of the race that produces him we can say

> 'thou hast great allies;
> Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
> And love, and man's unconquerable mind.'

So completely is the modern mind possessed by this conception of worth that the term 'man of character' is practically equivalent to a man of resolute will. With this conception in our minds we need not be surprised at men believing that so apparently small a thing as sin may be conquered, and so seemingly easy a matter as a good life attained by the innate moral power of man.

Due to a Conception of Personality.

Now, this solution of the problem rests on a conception of the personality. According to this conception, each and every act of a man stands alone, uninfluenced by anything another man may have done, and uninfluenced

by anything he himself may have done before. The question of freedom as it is presented here is the question whether the personality at the moment of choice and action has a definite and distinct moral quality; whether he has a greater interest in one kind of action than another; whether he has a desire, clear it may be or dim, conscious or vague, a longing or tendency towards one issue rather than another. The Pelagian answer says, that a man is not less free notwithstanding his own past life, and notwithstanding the life of the community in which he lives; a man is not less free than he would have been without the influence of that life. In other words, history does not count. The past has no power in shaping my view of life, and no power in determining my line of action. Twenty years of sin leave me as free to-day to turn to good as I was before I sinned. Accordingly there is in the moral world no solidarity between a man's present and his past, none between him and his family, none between him and the race. There is no racial, social, or personal solidarity whatever in morals. The mere statement of this solution seems to us to-day refutation enough. But one other word may be added. Our admiration of the unconquerable mind and its

splendid fruits in the world external to us does not really affect the difficulty before us. The will, firm and resolved, may and does successfully contend with what is external to itself. But in morality the will is not firm and resolved; nor does it here contend with something external to it. The will is weak and vacillating, meaning well to-day and utterly helpless before an old temptation to-morrow. And this for the simple but all-sufficient reason that the defect is *in the will itself*. When in ordinary speech we say that a man can do anything he likes, if he will only put his mind and will into it, we are possibly saying something that is true, but something also that is quite irrelevant. For our problem here is how a man *can* put his will into it. The will, the interest, the subtle desire, the deep-lying thought of the man, are held in the grasp of his solidarity with the race, with the society of which he forms a part, with the past of his own thinking, his own desires, and his own deeds. History does matter. Yet is he free, because his every act is the expression of himself and not of another; it is his own view of life expressed in his own way, without compulsion from any one.

The second great answer to our problem is that which Augustine gave and which still

goes by his name. This also rests upon a conception of human personality, and with that we begin. The single word solidarity will bring us abreast of one aspect of this profound solution. In no part of our being, in no act that we ever perform, in no desire that ever springs up within the heart, in no impulse that ever carries us beyond ourselves, do we stand alone. We come of a long descent, and bear clear traces of it in our innermost soul; we are each of us but parts of a vast whole, and from that whole we can never be entirely separated. In the course of these lectures we have had from time to time to deal with the fact that in a real way we and our environment are one; we are born with a definite bodily and mental endowment into a family and community where from our first days we learn, imitate, are fashioned in a hundred subtle ways without a thought on our part; the language we speak, the books we read, the customs we practise, the ambitions we harbour, the convictions we entertain, all these at first are not ours. There we have solidarity. Moreover, there is a personal solidarity which takes its start in the earliest act of which we are capable; no sooner do we act than we produce a bias however slight towards a repetition of that

The Augustinian Answer.

Personal Solidarity.

act; we are already on the highway to the formation of a habit, which may become inveterate. No act we ever perform again in that sphere is altogether and absolutely free, in the sense of Pelagius. So far any one may follow. But there are many Christian men who would carry this out to its logical conclusion and maintain that every act of the human soul is determined, and determined towards sin through the racial solidarity to the fountainhead of sin. We shall see immediately how deep this goes.

The Semi-Pelagian Answer.

But there is a modification of these extreme views which exercises its influence over multitudes of Christians, a modification which is called Semi-Pelagianism; but which, as Professor Loofs has said, might with almost equal truth be called Semi-Augustinianism. This arose from a protest in the human mind against the seeming fatalism of Augustinianism and its apparent neglect of the need of an answer on man's part to the Gospel appeal. Thus men came to argue that the work of grace began in God's response to the cry of the human soul. Men first knock and then God opens; they seek and therefore God answers; they return from the far country, and then God goes out to meet them. The soul in its misery over sin pants for the living

God, and God in His compassion satisfies its desire. Or again the argument runs that God begins his work within the soul, but the soul immediately takes up the work and carries it to a successful issue. Men add their moral power to God's free gift, and together they bring deliverance about; men throw the weight of their moral decision into the scales, and thus give preponderance to grace. As will at once be seen this also involves a view of human personality. Behind this answer to the problem there lies the conception that in man there is a spiritual power separate and different from the Spirit of God. There are two sources of power, a man's natural spiritual power, and God's supernatural spiritual power.[1] A man may add his to God's, or, on the other hand, God may add His to man's. God's power is insufficient until man adds his; or God's grace is not operative until man by his desire or effort brings it into play. Perhaps an illustration from the sphere of Aesthetics will bring out the difficulty of accepting this solution. In the presence of a glorious sun-

The Conception of Personality.

[1] If one might compare a spiritual matter to a physical, this would be analogous to the question whether man could add to the energy in the world. Is God the fountainhead of all moral and spiritual power? would be analogous to the question whether the law of the Conservation of Energy is true.

set, what does the artist contribute from his own soul to produce the rapture which he experiences at the sight? He sees the beauty, he opens his soul to it, he receives it, dwells on it, delights in it, glories in it, is carried away by it. It is for him not to create or even add to this splendour, but to recognise and accept; his attitude is wholly receptive. It is not there, apart from him. To him it does not exist unless he has the faculty divine; but his faculty, divine though it be, does not make or increase the beauty of the scene. In a similar way we conceive the place of man in the larger world of spirit. We cannot create it or add to it; we can only recognise it, open our heart to it, receive it.[1] There is no spiritual power but in God. The well of water springing up within us is his

[1] 'I have sometimes thought that those who composed the prayer of confession in the beginning of the Genevese Liturgy had forgotten this great principle. In that formula the worshippers are taught to say: "Nous confessons, que nous sommes de pauvres pécheurs, nés dans la corruption, inclins au mal, *incapables par nous-mêmes de faire du bien.*" The expression seems to indicate that they would have thought themselves in a better condition if they had been *capables par eux-mêmes de faire du bien.* The authors of the prayer probably meant merely to express their sense of man's dependence on God for the power of doing well, and had no conception that the words in their natural sense seemed to express a regret that this was his condition.' *The Spiritual Order*, by Thomas Erskine, p. 20.

Spirit, given at the first, increased from time to time through the working of this Spirit in the lives and writings of men, and made permanent at last by the appearing of Christ and our conscious accepting of Him and His Holy Spirit.

### WHAT IS NEW IN THE SOUL?

WE come now to the closer consideration of the process by which this acceptance on the part of man is brought about. Here we find ourselves at once in the presence of the belief of Christian men, that it is God and God alone Who has made them believers. 'I believe,' the Christian says, 'but somehow it is God Who has accomplished it in me.' If the man has grown up quietly in the love of God, it is because his heavenly Father has been continually dealing in mercy with him; if he has entered on the new life sharply and, as it were, with violence, it is because God by His Spirit has broken through all his bonds and set him free. He is to-day what he is, not through what he himself has done, but through the gracious work of God within him. He understands that this is the meaning of our Lord's words, Ye must be born again; of St. Paul's when he speaks of a new creation,

of St. John's when he says, Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God. Now, it is evident that whatever the change is that has taken place, there remains something which is the same. He is the same person, with qualities and gifts and powers unchanged. What is it then that is new? What is born within him? Old writers describe it as the bestowal of new 'substance.' John Owen says:—

Owen and Goodwin.

> 'There is not only a moral but a *physical* immediate operation of the Spirit, by His power and grace, upon the minds or souls of men in their regeneration.'[1]

Thomas Goodwin calls it 'a new principle' and says:—

> 'One fundamental difference between them that fall away and others that persevere in grace is, that in the first there is not a change of heart, nor a new principle—a seed from God that remains. . . . In other words it (the heart) becomes new, new acts towards new objects, so new principles.'[2] A believer, he says, may fall into sin, 'yet there is a constant abiding principle which lusts unto the contrary.' Bless God, he goes on, 'if thou dost find such an abiding principle so wrought in thee. Bless God for it, for it is a great work; as

[1] Owen's *Works*, vol. iii. pp. 307, 316.

[2] Goodwin's *Works*, vol. vi. p. 215.

in Adam at first there was the image of God, as a principle concreated with him, which was the foundation of all.' [1]

In these sentences we find 'principle' used as the equivalent of 'a seed of God,' or the 'image of God.' It is that out of which the new life comes. What then is it? These writers of course acknowledge that this new principle is not the undoing of the natural powers of man—his soul remains intact, thought, will, and conscience. They maintain strongly that no force is applied to the will, that the believer himself wills what he does. Principal Cunningham, who sooner or later always comes to the point, puts it in this way: — Cunningham.

'Regeneration may be taken either in a wider or a more limited sense. In the wider sense it comprehends the whole process by which he is renewed; in the more limited sense it means "only the first implantation of spiritual life, by which a man dead in sins and trespasses is quickened or made alive so that he is no longer dead."' [2]

In this more limited sense the Reformers held that man was passive, but not in the sense that God regenerated them against their wills.

[1] Goodwin's *Works*, vol. vi. p. 216.
[2] *Historical Theology*, vol. i. p. 617.

To-day psychology would be inclined to say that in nothing that happens within a man is he entirely passive; but it would add that there is much, very much, that happens within him in which he does not *will*. Before a man can will the good as good and as a whole, his will must be renewed, but he may do many a good turn to his neighbour without that. Our problem is: What happens to a man who is dead in sin, that is, whose mind and will are set on sin—some sin he likes, some line of life he prefers to doing good—so that he shall will the good because it is good, and freely answer to the call of God within him? We have seen how a man may be so absorbed in evil, so beset by it, and have the universe of thought and imagination so debased by it, that no impulse or desire will ever reach him but one of evil. What can possibly make sure that he will have his whole mind, desire and aim set on God? In Dr. Cunningham's words, it is not by creating in him 'a new and different power of volition, but giving it different capacities, and bringing it wholly under different influences.' I am not sure what is meant by giving the will different capacities, unless it be the turning of the self in its capacity as will upon different things. And that inter-

pretation seems to be borne out by some later words :—

'The aversion or enmity of man's natural mind to God and divine things must be taken away—a new and different disposition, taste, or tendency from anything that exists in unrenewed men, or that can be elicited from the ordinary operation of their natural principles, must be communicated to them ; and this can proceed only from the immediate operation of divine grace—the special agency of the Holy Spirit.' [1]

This bringing of the will under wholly new influences, this communicating of a new and different disposition, taste, or tendency to a man, is what we wish to follow.

In order to realise somewhat more distinctly the action of the Holy Spirit on the soul, let us take the case of a man who is just approaching the moment when he will accept the salvation of Christ. He has acquired in some measure a knowledge of the Christian religion, and is familiar with something of what is involved in conceptions of God, sin, forgiveness, judgment. But they have never had any kind of vital interest for him. As a man he has lived a life of indifference to spiritual things. During the week he takes no time for prayer or serious meditation ; in church

A Soul approaching Decision.

[1] *Historical Theology*, vol. i. p. 620.

he can think his own thoughts, live over again his hours of work or pleasure or anxiety, while the words of eternal life are 'bumming away like a buzzard clock over his head.' It is all true, he supposes; he takes it for granted, but in the meantime it has not the slightest significance for his own life. A day comes, however, when it acquires significance. Life lies open to attack from many sides; a disaster that falls upon his business or a dangerous illness makes him fear the future for a little, or the agony of a dying child drives him to prayer, or its death reveals the helplessness of man, or a flagrant transgression proves to him, what he has often denied, that he is in the grip of a masterful sin. Some tribulation has brought him face to face with the deeper realities of the world, with the unseen and eternal. He now attends to them, thinks of them perhaps steadily for a time, sees now that if all these things which he has taken for granted be true they are the most important of all truths. As he goes on attending, there arises a vague desire that he may realise them in his own experience, then a restlessness in the perception that he does not, then again a deeper desire that he may. He tries to make them his own, and finds that he cannot; there is something wanting which he is quite aware

of but cannot describe. This defect, this incapacity for an action he has set his heart on, may worry him, may make him miserable, may even plunge him into despair. He goes seeking and searching hither and thither, from friend to friend, from curate to bishop, from church to church. But some day, thinking it all over, quietly it may be, with the great truths of sin and mercy before his mind, the heavens seem to open, and the light of God falls upon his heart. He sees it all now, he knows it all; a great peace enters his soul, and he has God as his possession for ever. What is this that has happened to him?

### THE NEW THROUGH THE OLD

IN attempting to answer this question, let us remind ourselves that there is in man by his very constitution a spiritual nature, something akin to God. The man himself, the soul in him at the very centre, has an element of the Divine. As John Owen puts it: 'Under the ashes of our collapsed nature, there are yet remaining certain sparks of celestial fire.'[1] Without this we could have

'Sparks of Celestial Fire.'

[1] Owen's *Works*, vol. iii. p. 345. Owen proceeds in this passage: 'Those great workings about the things of God and towards Him, which are sometimes found in children, are not

no spiritual history. All that comes to us in the way of spiritual experience is the development of this, its nourishment, its strengthening, its perfecting unto the very fullness of Christ. Regeneration is but the emancipation of it from the bondage of the world and the self, and glory is but the consummation of it and its attainment of mastery for ever. During the course of a normal life in a Christian country like ours, the experiences of the day are continually appealing to this spiritual nature. We are living in an atmosphere that is laden with the richest influences of our religion; we are supported in every movement by the care and consideration and skill of those who heartily believe in it. The growing mind does not observe this, but it is none the less potent for good. In those early days of its quiet development, Christianity is mastering the spirit through the subtle presence of a public opinion which is making for what is worthy, through the conversation of friends and teachers or the lives of those in high place, through the tone of the home and the books lying about the room. A custom of thinking and feeling, an ideal of

mere effects of nature; for that would not so act itself, were it not by one occasion or another for that end administered by the providence of God, effectually excited.'

thought and conduct are slowly building themselves up. Even when a man takes to sin, he is in the midst of very much that appeals to his better nature—words that are overheard on the street, rebukes from his friends or his enemies, shocks from the fall of companions into scandal, the death of those who have been living their sinful life with him. These and many events like them make their appeal. The very community with its institutions, and literature and laws, and the civilisation which we have inherited from a past long forgotten, are surely among the most beneficent of divine works. And when that community has grasped the thought of its high purpose as an instrument for the upbuilding of a Kingdom of God, then we can understand how souls are almost unconsciously fashioned into spiritual manhood. Such a community, guided and led by men of the Spirit, has marks which distinguish it from the world around it. Imperfect as it often is, it is still moved by love of God and man; it is unholy, and yet is struggling after a holiness which it has seen and cannot now rest satisfied without attaining. This Church of Christ, as we call it, has its own history as striking as the civil history of nations; it has made its own achievements, enrolled

The Holy Spirit in Society.

its great band of workers, written in blood the story of its saints and martyrs. And all this is calling out new heroisms and consecrations without which the world would be dark indeed. No one can calculate the influence upon the young of the story of the struggles and sufferings of the high and the lowly for their native land or their God. There is not a man among us who does not know how the imagination is fired to do and to suffer something for our fellow-men, by just such tales as these. If, then, all this could be gathered together, consolidated, welded into one visible actuality, what an enormous 'suggestive' power it would exercise upon the generations. This suggestive power of a great Church we do not often think of until perhaps we come to live in a land where it is realised. The mass of it, as we have seen, arrests the mind, imposing itself upon us, and overawing us as great mountains do. And when such a Church is filled with the Spirit of God, and is working for ends that are God's and not the world's, then we discover how natural it is for the young to hold and to be held by the Christian faith. That may go on for years without observation. But the day comes at last when the end and purpose of it all breaks in on the mind; they catch sight of the corporate

life of which they have themselves formed a part; it becomes their own, and they are ready to defend their family or their Church or their land, as the boy Gratry [1] did with a bar of iron against a German who maligned the French in his hearing. But at the moment of their taking up the common purpose of the community into their spirit, they have surrendered their spirit to that purpose; they have in an instant passed into a larger self, a spiritual self. Now, this is undoubtedly a work of the Holy Spirit, albeit it is a preparatory work.

In the Subconscious.

It is true that the great majority of these feelings, impressions, thoughts, pass away and are forgotten; they have become, as we are now in the habit of saying, subconscious. But they are by no means lost. They have been the experiences of our souls, our selves. We have been active during the experience; it is we who have felt, we who have thought, we who have struggled and aspired. In becoming subconscious, they have not entered into some compartment of the hidden life which is separate from the soul. They are a portion of the soul, having enriched it, strengthened it, modified it. And it is this soul, thus enriched with the experiences of

[1] *Souvenirs de ma Jeunesse.*

to-day, that will deal (in a way which, to this extent, is new) with the experiences of to-morrow. In so far as it has dealt with them in a worthy way, it has prepared itself for the approach of the Holy Spirit.

'In the Knowledge of Christ.'

We have just spoken of the nature of the soul and of the preparatory work accomplished in it through the home and its training, and through the rich influences of a Christian community. We come now to a deeper work of the Holy Spirit, the 'enlightening of the mind in the knowledge of Christ.' Notwithstanding all this preparatory work of which we have spoken, the soul is still outside this deepest personal relationship to Christ, and in this relationship lies eternal life. For this, man has been made, and he is not himself in his fullness until it has been accomplished in him. The Holy Spirit accomplishes it by bringing him to the knowledge of Christ. But this movement has a double aspect, a positive and a negative—an assertion of what *ought to be* and a repudiation of what *is*; a desire of the good and an aversion towards the evil; a seeking after Christ and a fear of sin. Fear, however, is a much stronger instinct than desire; in this case sin is the present and actual condition of the soul, and the Christ is as yet less clamant.

Something is wrong and something therefore must be done; and in his distress the man, looking beyond himself, cries, What must I do? Now, the very asking of this question turns the mind away from the fact that sin is present, and opens the mind to the coming of something new; an expectant mood has been produced in which the mind is ready to seize on a strong, massive thought that promises deliverance. It is in this condition of mind that 'fancy' religions get their entrance and sometimes work wonders. If nothing is borne in upon the mind from without, the answer to the question will certainly come from the subconscious, in other words from our own past experience. Not any chance thought, however, from the subconscious, but only a thought in the 'system' which my difficulty has at the moment created, or which has been created formerly by similar difficulties. The 'true self' or the 'better self,' or, to put it more correctly, the whole self with its rich experiences that have accumulated through many years, speaks. This may be the critical moment in a man's religious history, and at this point the Holy Spirit enlightens the mind in the knowledge of Christ.

This knowledge of Christ, of course, must

involve a knowledge of His earthly career, of His teaching, of His death, and of His present powerful working in the hearts of men. Now, if the mind could be concentrated on Christ, Christ Himself would do the rest. It is personality that impresses personality. The Divine Personality of our Lord appeals to that element of the divine in our personality, calls it forth, gives it strength, and will finally give it mastery. This is what the Spirit does. 'He takes of the things that are Christ's, and shows them to men; He glorifies Christ.' Somehow a man comes to see that Christ's life is the true life, is the 'good' which he has always and everywhere been seeking, the answer to all his questionings, the solution of all his difficulties. He desires Him. The reason evangelical preaching has been so fruitful in the past is that it has dealt so largely with the exhibition of Christ in His person and His work.[1]

Personality impresses Personality.

## THE CAPTURE OF THE SOUL BY GOD

BUT it is not enough to know even in the most intimate way the truths of Christ; nor is it enough to desire Him; for

[1] Richard Cecil, at the close of his experience, said that the most fruitful preaching was the preaching of the privileges rather than the duties of the Gospel.

the soul that both knows and desires may find itself quite unable to act. It is arrested by the presence of other elements in the life and mind. A man may have had some experience in the past which has left behind it a subtle sentiment in opposition to the Gospel; or he has some fear of what may be said about him if he becomes religious now; or he is thinking of what he will have to part with if he does; or he cannot bear the idea of breaking away from some old friend; or he is in the grip of some worldly end or some secret sin—it is something perhaps quite beyond his analysis, but very strong in its subtlety. He sees Christ to be the true end which he ought to seek and is in reality seeking; and yet there is within him a 'set' against Christ, a perversity of will which he cannot overcome, an unyieldingness just at the central point. It is clear that no force can be applied to the will; *we* must accept the truth, the deliverance. We must not be driven to accept it save by the force of our own heart and mind. The opposition we feel towards the spiritual life is due to the fact that it comes to us as something external to our nature. If only the suggestion could come to us from within our nature, if only our whole inner being would assent, then acceptance would be

A 'Set' against Christ.

easy, we should be realising ourselves, and expressing our own best thought in our own actions. Now, this is what the Holy Spirit does—acting on a man's soul not as an alien power, but as a kindred power, enabling him to fulfil his own desires, and realise his own best thoughts of what he ought to be.

A Vision of God.

'I knew a man some thirty years ago,' says a religious teacher of our time, 'who was troubled in spirit through grievous things, and the world seemed dark to him and almost without God. And in his care and pain he went out at night on to a lonely common and stood beside a great stone quarry. And the stars were in the heavens, and in their eternal silence looked down upon him. And there and then he knew that God was with him, and felt that living touch of God upon his spirit; rarely since then has he felt God quite so near. But the memory of that moment of vision has remained with him always, and it has made him more sure of God than any argument; nor when he has recalled that moment, has he been able to doubt that that was a true revelation of the Eternal to him in his weakness and need.'[1]

That was the experience of one troubled soul. Take another, and this time the case of John Bunyan, so familiar to every one. He had

[1] *God and the Soul*, by Richard A. Armstrong, p. 98. Cf. Pratt's *Psychology of Religious Belief*, pp. 169-173.

been in torment of mind over the life he had lived, and could get no comfort from the stray texts of condemnation that he brought to bear upon his condition. Suddenly there darted in upon him the words, 'My grace is sufficient.' John Bunyan.

'At this methought I felt some stay, as if there might be hopes. But, oh how good a thing it is for God to send His word.' The fact is, as he confesses, he had read this very passage a short time before, and finding no comfort in it had flung aside his Bible in a pet. Yet the verse did not fully bring him peace, because, as he thought, it did not say that the grace was sufficient *for him*. He found his mistake. 'These words did with great power break in upon me, My Grace is sufficient *for thee*, My grace is sufficient for thee, My grace is sufficient for thee, three times together; and oh methought that every word was a mighty word unto me.'

Still the trouble continued for weeks. He describes the final deliverance in this way:

'One day as I was passing in the field, and that too with some dashes of Conscience, fearing lest yet all was not right, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul, Thy righteousness is in heaven; and methought withal, I saw with the eyes of my soul Jesus Christ at God's right hand. There I saw was my righteousness; so that wherever I was, or whatever I was adoing, God could not say of me, He

wants my righteousness, for that was just before him. I also saw moreover that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse; for my righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, the same yesterday and to-day and for ever. Now did my chains fall from my legs indeed; I was loosed from my affliction and irons; my temptations also fled away; so that from that time those dreadful scriptures of God left off to trouble me; now went I home rejoicing for the grace and love of God.'[1]

John Owen.

Christian biography is full of material of this kind, and one might go on quoting without end. Let one other suffice. John Owen, the great theologian, had become a preacher of the Gospel without entering into that peace which he believed he might know. He was a truly religious man, living not for himself but for God, and yet he was troubled and burdened with a fear of Him. One Sunday a companion and he had gone to hear the famous Dr. Edmund Calamy preach, but an unknown stranger appeared in the pulpit, to their painful disappointment. His companion proposed that they leave the church and seek another of the distinguished preachers of the town. Owen refused, and in a mood

[1] Bunyan's *Grace Abounding.*

of resignation waited through the service. The simplicity and earnestness of the opening prayer arrested him, and when the text was given out, 'Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?' he inwardly prayed that God might take his own fear away. The sermon was a simple exhibition of the mercy of God. And God in His mercy set the great thinker free.[1]

We are at present attempting (we trust humbly, and realising the mystery of the deepest things in the life of the soul) to fix the mind on the moment when the burden of fear and guilt falls from the heart, and joy and peace take possession of it. Now, in the man there is at that moment a fundamental spiritual nature more or less developed, but tried and strained by the weary weight of some anxiety; there is a struggle; there is a time of quiet longer or shorter; there is the laying open of the spirit to that Spirit who alone can speak the word of peace. Faith runs low, or is clouded over, or is bewildered with doubts, or blinded by disaster or sorrow; the religious heart will not let the problem alone, until at last it cries, What must I do? and the very question, as we have said, gives the needed rest

[1] This is taken from the *Life of Owen* prefixed to his collected works.

from the burden. The heart is turned *elsewhere*, and is open for other thoughts. It is true that at the moment suggestions will come from the subconscious, and relevant suggestions too as we have seen. But there is something else, which we often describe as the surrender of the heart to the Spirit of God. Yet the word surrender does not hit the experience.[1] We do not surrender to a beautiful landscape; it captures us. The shepherds of Bethlehem did not choose the vision or the 'Gloria.' They were rapt, laid hold of, lifted out of themselves. The hearing and the sight were theirs; and from these they could have turned away. This was their part, to reject or receive. They neither brought the visitation, nor added to it when it came; theirs only to see it, and to hear it, and to enter into its joy. The great moment came, and their whole heart leapt out in response. In Bunyan, in Owen, in the vast multitude of troubled souls, there

Is it 'Surrender' or 'Capture'?

[1] Cf. with above these words from *Romance and Reality*, by Holbrook Jackson: 'The most beautiful places are not those which you go to see deliberately, but those which visit you. They are the places which rise out of the shadowy plain to greet you unawares, the places that steal upon you like dreams, that flood your vision like sunlight. They are, like all memorable things, the places that happen. If you go to meet them, you are almost certain to miss them, for they are coy and shy, like beauty or joy or a maiden new to love.'

is the struggle of a divided self, one thought or experience or affection or ambition warring with another. The man loves Christ, yet cannot leave father and mother and wife and child for His sake; he would fain follow Him, yet cannot break away from his comrade in sin; he hears Him call, yet the call of the old life is in his heart. Suddenly the light breaks, and now he sees and knows. Now he can make the sacrifice, undergo the trial, leave any friend for this Friend, mortify any affection for the love of Christ. Or perhaps trials and burdens, affections and desires, have vanished with the rising of the light, as dark shadows flee before the dawn. It has all taken place in a moment, but the world is never the same again. Old things have passed away, all things have become new.[1] The whole soul has been caught up in one act of vision. The whole soul, we say, for there has been a unifying or harmonising of the

[1] It is surprising how many plain, uneducated people speak of the change that is produced on the face of nature by this change in their relationship to God. A working woman writes: 'I was like to choke with joy, and thanked God for His great deliverance. Then the peace my brother spoke of settled on me, and the fear of death vanished and has never returned. I went to the door, thanking God, and was amazed at the changed look of the sky and of everything round. I said, "Where have my eyes been that I never saw the beauty of it before?"'

warring elements of the self, all its currents and tendencies, its misgivings and fears, its hopes and aspirations, into one essentially spiritual nature in union with God. The amazing thing is that this is done in direct antagonism to all that the world counts valuable, in the teeth of a consuming ambition, the judgment of an opposing society, in spite of the adamantine grip of sin. And when it is done just so, it is done for ever; there is no turning back with God. The whole being of the man has assented, has been caught up into a new world and a new light, in which everything is seen as God sees it. From this moment obligation and desire are one; duty and delight are one; law and love are one. St. Augustine said: 'Love God, and do as you like.' That is henceforth the whole religion of the man.

The Spirit reveals Christ.

In passing through this experience a man is not conscious of the Holy Spirit. What he is conscious of is that he was in trouble of spirit, that he was dealing with God, or contemplating the Gospel of Christ, or the sacrifice of Christ, or eager for deliverance from a fear or a sin. The Spirit glorifies Christ; takes of the things that are Christ's and shows them to him—sometimes one aspect of the spiritual life, sometimes another.

It is in this act of contemplating Christ that the change comes. Bunyan puts it in this way: 'Now I saw in my dream that the highway up which Christian was to go was fenced on either side with a wall, and that wall is called *salvation*. Up this way therefore did Christian run, but not without great difficulty because of the load on his back. He ran thus till he came at a place somewhat ascending; and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below in the bottom a sepulchre. So I saw in my dream that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell off from his back and began to tumble; and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre where it fell in, and I saw it no more. Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, "He hath given me rest by his sorrow, and life by his death." Then he stood still a while to look and wonder; for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the cross should thus ease him of his burden. He looked therefore and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks. Now as he stood looking and weeping, behold three shining ones came to him and saluted him with "Peace be to thee."

So the first said to him, "Thy sins be forgiven." The second stripped him of his rags, and clothed him with change of raiment. The third also set a mark in his forehead, and gave him a roll with a seal upon it, which he bid him look on as he ran, and that he should give it in at the Celestial Gate; so they went their way. Then Christian gave three leaps for joy, and went on singing.' After quoting these words, William Arthur proceeds in an argument:[1] 'Look straight to the cross. For pardon, for escape from hell, for rest and hope and purity, look thither, thither, only thither. If thy burden fall not at once, yet still look, look to the cross, and fall it will, far sooner and far more surely than if thou attempt to untie it by thy arguments.' There can be no doubt of it. But psychologically it is the setting of the mind on Christ, in this revelation of His graciousness and of the infinite love of God in it, that makes it possible for the Spirit of Christ to act unto the soul's complete deliverance. The whole personality of the man is in it, and the Personality of Christ lays hold of it, and gives the victory over sin.

[1] *The Tongue of Fire.*

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SOUL IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

TO one who has had an intimate experience of God like that of which we have been speaking, there will inevitably come the desire to repeat it. What has happened once can happen again, and the memory of the peace and joy and strength of soul that followed the experience keeps calling for their continuance. The soul seeks the presence of God. We know how men do their best when those they revere are looking on; the runner is aided by the crowd of spectators, the poet by the approval of his fellow poets, the reformer by the thought of generations who will yet bless his name, the martyr by the sense that he is encompassed about with a great cloud of witnesses. Every Christian feels that if he could realise the presence of God, he would have a new confidence in life, a fearlessness of defeat, patience in trouble, and a sure hope of deliverance. There is one way, it has been said, of overcoming all

our spiritual enemies, viz. : spiritual joy, and the perpetual bearing of God in our minds. This spiritual joy the Christian has already experienced through the coming of God into his life so marvellously, and now he asks how he may bear Him perpetually in his mind.

## THE UNIVERSAL PRESENCE OF GOD

ONE of the earliest of our religious lessons is that God is everywhere present; nor have all our discoveries in science done more for us in this direction than enable us to widen the range of the thought. We have not got beyond the words of the psalmist:

Psalm cxxxix.

'Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee.' We cannot escape from God if we should wish it; and it would seem

that the wish for His presence is needless, seeing we are always there. Wherever we may go, we have an absolute assurance that we are in the presence of the One we love. Although modern science has broadened out the universe for us immeasurably, telling us that worlds on worlds incalculably numerous lie deep in space beyond our thought, yet we can say of it this, that if we take the wings of light and reach out to the uttermost star, even there we are led and held by the hand of God.

Present in the Life of Man.

But it is equally true that God is present in every act of every man. There is not a breath he breathes, nor a beat of his pulse, nor a glance he takes on this fair world, nor a sound that strikes his ear, but is his through the presence and act of God. In Him we live and move and have our being. The same must be said of our mental life. We cannot think a thought without Him; not a feeling awakens joy or sorrow within our heart that does not come from Him. The power by which men bless or curse one another is His gift; the ability and wit with which they defy God and blaspheme His name are God's endowment to them. He upholds all things and all men, even the wicked in their wickedness, by the word of His power.

Wholly present.

But we must go further still. Not only is God present everywhere, but He is *wholly* present everywhere. Through all the ages he has been the same God, whether men knew Him or not—the God of power and might, but also the God of mercy and grace and tender love—always and everywhere. There is not with God a 'more' and a 'less.' He is not more present here, and less present there, not more present with the righteous and less present with the wicked. The infinite love of God that led Him to give His Son for men was manifested before there was a good man to desire it; the God of grace would never be present on the earth at all if He were not present with the wicked. Wherever man is, there is the Father working in all the plenitude of His power and wisdom and love. St. Augustine, almost at the beginning of his *Confessions*,[1] deals with this thought.

'Do heaven and earth which thou hast made, and in which thou hast made me, contain thee? or, because what ever exists cannot exist without thee, does it follow that whatever exists contains thee? Since then I also exist, why do I ask thee to come to me, when I could have no being unless thou wert already in me? Whither then do I call thee, when I am in thee? or whence canst thou come to me?

[1] *Confessions*, Bk. I. ii., iii.

For whither can I withdraw myself beyond heaven and earth, that there may be intervening space through which my God may come to me, who hath said, "I fill heaven and earth"? Do heaven and earth contain thee, since thou fillest them? or, since they do not contain thee, dost thou fill them and yet something remains over? And when heaven and earth are filled, where dost thou pour that which remains of thee? But thou who fillest all things, fillest thou all things with thy whole self? or, since all things cannot contain thee wholly, do they contain a part of thee, and do all at once contain the same part? or does each contain its own part—the greater more, the smaller less? Then is there one part of thee greater, and another less? Or art thou wholly everywhere, while nothing contains thee wholly?'

If then God is present everywhere and in every heart, what can be meant by saying that the soul comes into the presence of God? If we cannot at any moment flee from Him, what can be meant by the command that we abide in Him? The truth is that in a spiritual sense, God is present in us only as we open our heart to Him, as we deliberately and of our free choice make Him the object of our thoughts; and that not because we make Him an object of our *thinking*, but because we are interested in Him for His own sake. In a spiritual sense, He is present

In God's Presence.

only when we trust Him, love Him, make His ends our ends, and put forth energy in the accomplishing of His will. If in this sense He is not in our thoughts, then for us He might as well not be at all. And yet even the desire to have His presence is a proof that already He is present within us. It is one of Pascal's many fine sentences: 'Thou wouldst not seek me unless thou didst possess me'—words addressed by God to man. This presence of God is something we are always tending to make external, as if God had yet to come to us, and we had to plead with Him to come, or had to do some new thing that we might be found worthy of His coming. 'I sought thee without me,' said St. Augustine, 'and thou wast within me.' To be in the presence of God is to realise with the heart that we are in His presence already. We are in His presence when awe fills the soul at the thought of Him, when thoughts of what is good and noble and just and pure and lovely awaken joy, when we are pained to know that a worthy cause is defeated, and good men are thwarted in their efforts for righteousness. Men try to visualise this fact by imaging God as walking at their side; or they think of Christ as sitting at the right hand of God; or they control their earthly mind by the thought of Him as on the cross,

as bound to the pillar, as praying in the Garden of Olivet, as sweating drops of blood, and all for their sakes. But the truth lies deeper and is more fruitful for the spiritual life than that. He is present in the heart, in the conscience, in the events of our day or in the happenings of Nature now, just as He was to Christ His Son. Christ saw Him in the flowers of the field, in the flight of birds, in the faces of little children, in the anguish of a father over a lost son; and He taught His disciples to see Him in the hunger and thirst, in the needs and disasters of His brethren.

Intuition of God.

To a religious man this is not a mere work of imagination, but a true perception, an intuition, a direct vision of reality. It is surely not less real than the beauty of a landscape. There is many a man who does not see the beauty. The world is so much with him, early and late; he lays waste his powers so completely in getting and spending; he has given his heart away so that he sees little in Nature that is his own. But the beauty is there, clear, indisputable, and the poet in his horror of the blindness that cannot discern it cries:—

> 'Great God! I'd rather be
> A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
> So might I standing on this pleasant lea,
> Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn.'

Still, whether we see it or no the beauty is there, and yet *to us* it is there only by our perceiving it. Our perception of it is immediate *in* the scene. It is no creation of our imagination, no fancy of a heated or perturbed mind. The beauty is there, waiting to be perceived; and here in the mind is a power waiting to be awakened by the sight to a full knowledge of what beauty is. The day comes when it flashes on the soul, and the soul flashes to the sight of it; and from that day to that soul beauty is present in the world for evermore. It is so with the perception of God. In the world of nature, of history, in the secret movements of one's own soul, there is a Something deeper than beauty, more continuous, more compelling, which is *seen* by faith—that intuition of the spirit of man that there is a Spirit in the world, moving and working for spiritual ends. Not every one sees it any more than beauty.[1] Thousands deny its existence, and

[1] Professor Huxley, in conversation with a scientific friend, expressed his surprise at his friend's faith, and asked how he himself, if the evidence for the existence of God was so clear, could not in the least perceive it. 'May I speak frankly?' asked his friend. 'Certainly,' answered Huxley. 'It is because you are colour-blind.' Huxley was silent for a moment, and then replied: 'And of course if I am colour-blind, I should not be aware of it.'

count themselves modern and advanced because they deny it; yet those who have seen it once are unmoved by all denials of all the world, for they have it as an abiding possession.

But just because of the pressure and insistence of the world around us, the presence of God must be cultivated by us diligently. This is done by the activity of our own spirits, for this too is a mental life. Nothing can bring Him near but a thought, and a thought can dismiss Him. The God who is omnipresent, and is dwelling in every one to support life and thought itself, can be dismissed from the spirit of the weakest of His creatures by a thought. But as the God of grace He is present only when we trust Him. We must hold Him in our thought, let the heart go out to Him, see Him in events which men say refute our faith in Him, give our lives to the realising of a kingdom that is unseen. He was present in Christ, although no ruler or accredited judge could see it; He was in the Cross, although it was an offence both to Jew and Greek. Christ and His Cross brought Jew and Greek, judge and ruler, not into the presence of God, but of prejudice and passion. It would seem then that although in a very real sense God is present everywhere and in

In His Presence by Thought.

In the Conscious Mind.

every heart, He is not present in the deeper and only spiritual sense save in the mind that is conscious of His presence. It is true that the mind which is thus conscious of Him has been enriched through many an experience that is now perhaps forgotten; it is true also that the mind conscious of Him is conscious just in this way because of the presence in it of the results of all these forgotten experiences lying in the subconscious. Nevertheless, in this deeper spiritual sense, God is present not in the subconscious but only in the conscious mind; we come into His presence only through a temper, a disposition, an intention.

There are happy souls that have come into the presence of God on the sunny side of religion. They have been trained to think of Him as a Father, and of the world as unspeakably beautiful, such as it was to William Blake. They have felt themselves accompanied all their days by a Friend, kind and beneficent, merciful and pure. They have been led to trust in His care of them even in the dark, to believe that He was guiding them even when they did not see their way, and loving them even when He was severe.

'He is to them the impersonation of kindness and beauty. They read his character, not in the

disordered world of man, but in romantic and harmonious nature. Of human sin they know perhaps little in their own hearts, and not very much in the world; and human suffering does but melt them to tenderness. Thus, when they approach God, no inward disturbance ensues.'[1] F. W. Newman.

Most men, however, come into His presence by another path than this, through experiences of disaster it may be, or of sin. Yes! so marvellous is the grace of God that even sin has not proved to be the ruin of men's souls, but the deepening of their knowledge of His presence. As sorrow makes the one for whom we mourn almost omnipresent to the heart that is mourning, so sin reveals God, making Him haunt the mind as a spectre until we find at last our peace in Him as a Friend. The modern desire to 'skip' the experience of contrition is short-sighted. From an educative point of view there is nothing that will render us so surely the heirs of the kingdom where God is always present as this poverty of spirit. Indeed this desire is not modern; it is the old story of Quietism in its view of sin.

'As soon as you fall into any fault,' said Molinos, 'without losing time in making reflections on your fall, you ought to chase your vain fears away with- Molinos.

[1] *The Soul: its Sorrows and its Aspirations*, p. 81.

out disquieting or disturbing yourself. Recognising humbly your fault, and seeing your misery, turn to the Saviour with a loving confidence. Delight in reposing on this surrender without reflecting whether God has forgiven you or not ; resume your exercises, enter again into recollection, as if you had not fallen. Do not be ridiculous, like a man who is contending for the prize, and happening to fall in running should keep lying on the ground, weeping and lamenting as he makes reflections on his accident. "My friend," you would say to him : "Don't lose your time ; rise and run again, for the man that rises and runs is as if he had not fallen." '[1]

Very good advice save only in this, that the man who has fallen is a fool if he has not learned from his fall that he must take care how he runs. And in the spiritual race, the falling is no accident, but a choice; and the runner must know that his fall is an offence against One who offered his aid which was declined. The true runner is he who lays aside his sin, and keeps looking to Jesus; his fall makes him look the more fixedly on Him alone. This sense of failure awakens in a man the desire of purification, and he knows the pure heart can be got from God alone, got in the conscious presence of God alone. There is this double movement within him—the

[1] *The Spiritual Guide.* For a discussion of Quietism *vide* Professor MacEwen's *Antoinette Bourignon*, ch. v.

effort to keep pure in order that he may see God, and the seeking of the presence of God in order that he may be kept pure. The stain of sin on his personality frets him and drives him into the presence of God; the need of God compels him to fight against every possibility of stain. There is an aesthetic element in this which we must not contemn. Men there are in numbers whose moral judgments are judgments of beauty, and whose religion finds this its most natural expression.[1] They speak of the beauty of holiness, and account Nature the pathway to the presence of God. Devotion is perhaps easiest for them there, for there they feel a Presence that disturbs them with the joy of elevated thoughts,

> 'Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things.'

From scenes like these they come forth purged in heart and mind and fitter for a worthy service of God. It is the language in which they think and speak. Moreover, this way of thinking enables them not merely to press into a richer life, but to turn away from sin, and from many things which are

[1] Cf. Sir John Seeley's *Natural Religion*, ch. v.

not sins, things legitimate enough but distracting. As we have said, there is a double movement in the bosom of every religious aspiration, and therefore self-denial, a limitation of life for the sake of this moral beauty. Consecration to anything noble involves the barring out of many an innocent enjoyment; it is a delight to scorn delights and live laborious days. The leap of the soul to God, the one great moment of fellowship with the Eternal, has awakened a new desire for perfection, an impatience with self, a longing for the presence of the Master and the harmony of the Master's mind.

### THE MEANS OF GRACE

THE spiritual life of man depends on the Communion of man with God and of God with man. In His great mercy He began it, and our concern now is to know how it can be maintained. There are ways and methods which long generations of Christian men have tested and approved, and which are commonly described as 'the means of grace,' the channels by which we can say on the one hand God reaches the human heart, or by which we can say on the other hand the human heart enters most surely into the presence of God.

Now, Luther with his usual penetration points out that there is but one means of grace, viz. the word, that of course in its fullest significance. This is what he says: [1] 'We must continually maintain that God communicates His Spirit or grace to no one but by His word. The word alone has power to make the true Christ who has died for our sins present in the heart.' The importance of this statement is seen at once when we remember the two dangers which beset the mind in dealing with religion. On the one side there is the danger of a magical conception of the means or symbols of our faith, on the other side the danger of mere fantasy, of pietistic dreams and airy creations that are out of all relation to facts. If due value is not given to the proclamation of the word as the medium of the activity of the Divine upon the human spirit, then we have the old conception of religion as a ceremony or external performance meant to appease God. If, however, we make religion a matter that is wholly internal and without relation to the facts of our common earthly life, then there is no check on the wandering visions of men, and no test of the validity of these visions in fashioning the

'The Word is the only means of Grace.'

[1] Art. 8 Malc. iii. 8. *Vide* Nitzsch's *Evangelische Dogmatik*, s. 549 ff.

souls of men according to the truth. Truth therefore must always be our first concern, and for this we must, as Luther says, continually maintain the place of the word.

The Power of Words.

Now, words are of importance to us only because of their meaning, because of the ideas they convey, the revelation they give of another heart, the suggestions they stir within us, the enlightening and quickening with which they enrich the mind. It is not only intellectual positions they communicate, but they awaken feelings by their force and fire, by their cadences, by their allusiveness to old emotions; and they evoke resolutions and move the will. Thus words are of the deepest value because they bring us near to the truth of things, to the last and ultimate reality. All this is peculiarly true of the Word of God. The Word of God has value to us only if it gives us a true conception of God. Granted, a conception of God is not God; nevertheless we cannot have God as God without a conception of Him. Naturally enough men fear a religion that is only a notional religion, separate from religious experience. As Pascal says: 'The heart has its reasons which the reason does not know'; we cannot give a rational explanation of our emotions, of our likings and our dislikings. But even these run far

back into the subconscious life of our own past or the past of our ancestors, and are no doubt the survival of perceptions and ideas and experiences now forgotten. The heart-religion of the simplest Christian and the deepest rapture of the Mystic rest on some conception of God; on some conception or other every man's religion is built. It is this fact that has necessitated a revelation on the part of God, and necessitates the proclamation of ideas on the part of those who believe in them, if the nations of the earth are to be won to Christ. The holding of a true idea does not of itself involve the entering into the true relationship with the Father, for we may take a cognitive interest apart from a personal interest in our religion. Still ideas are of the utmost value, for a false idea does of itself and necessarily involve some kind of false relationship. In matters of personal religion, to think correctly is to live correctly; and it is no less necessary to have the theory of one's practice than the practice of one's theory. Therefore we must seek the truth, and follow it at any cost; for allegiance to truth is allegiance to God.

The Value of Doctrine.

The influence of thought on life has induced the Church everywhere to lay emphasis on doctrine, and has led many Christian men to accept doctrine quite gladly on authority.

For life is bewildering and truth is hard to find; who are we that we should pretend to set ourselves against the discoveries of generations? So men commit themselves to a line of belief or a course of action, not because they are themselves persuaded, but because many other people are persuaded, or because this great Christian personality or that is persuaded that the belief or the action in question is right. Such surrender is, of course, a common and a necessary thing in life. We cannot all be experts in everything; the sailor cannot first prove his Nautical Almanac or the theory of cyclones before he steers his ship. We assent to many conclusions which we have neither time nor ability to prove; and it is evident indeed that many Christians must do the same with Christian doctrines. But that assent, although in the sphere of religion, is not a religious act. It is so far the giving up of self-direction, and of dependence on direct contact with the Divine in the sphere of religious truth. Just so far it is of no religious worth. It is of religious worth only when we have reared on it our edifice of experience, only when it has brought us into the presence of God. In a child's mind faith takes its rise in the personal trust in a parent, then it becomes trust in a moral perception, then in a leader

or a custom or a community or a church or a doctrine; and passing thus from stage to stage becomes at last an unmovable trust in the Great Personality of God in Christ. Only this last act of trust is religion. But this trust will lead to an ever-deepening *interpretation* of the act of trust and of the Person on whom the act is made; and no church (save of course the Roman Catholic) would think of forbidding the working over again of its interpretations or doctrines by competent Christian men. This is our heritage from the Reformation, that every Christian man, however weak, comes into direct relationship with the Eternal, can speak out according to his inalienable right what he has learned on his own account, interpret his own experience, and (it may be) enrich men's knowledge of God. Not through his dependence on the Church, but through his communion with God alone, does man live. God and man in fellowship together —that is life. Because we have lived in the secret presence of God, we have God's warrant to speak of what we there learned and know.

The Soul ever Dependent.

We should, however, err profoundly if we thought that men rose into the presence of God independently of the Church. Our first thought of God came from the Church, that portion of it which we call the home; our emotions, our actions have all been shaped

and fashioned by the Church. The whole complicated fabric of our mental life has been the creation of the Christian community. Only through our dependence on our fellows do we at last reach out to independence; at first we lean heavily on men, in order that we may at last lean only on God. Out of man's imperfection into His perfection, out of earth's incompleteness into heaven's completeness—that is the sum of the discipline through which, in His unsearchable wisdom, He leads every child of His. Browning, in his *Fifine at the Fair*, is trying to show how we must rise out of the false into the true, and gives this illustration of it:—

> 'In yonder bay I bathed
> This sunny morning: swam my best, then hung half swathed
> With chill, and half with warmth, i' the channel's midmost deep:
> You know how one—not treads but stands in water? . . .
> Try to ascend breast high? wave arms wide free of tether?
> Be in the air and leave the water altogether?
> Under went all again, till I resigned myself
> To only breathe the air that 's footed by an elf,
> And only swim the water. . . .
> Still the adept swims, this accorded, that denied;
> Can always breathe, sometimes see and be satisfied.'

And the poet's moral is surely wisdom; we cannot 'slip the sea and hold the heaven.' Nor can we part in our religion either with ideas or with facts, either with word or with symbol. Facts without ideas are meaningless, ideas without facts are empty.

The Spiritual Life is a Mental Life.

Back we come again to Luther's great saying: 'The word alone has power to make the true Christ present in the heart.' The spiritual life, says John Owen, is a mental life—an activity of the believer's mind. In other words, it consists in acts of adoration, in vision, in surrendering the self to serve the purposes of God, in the full fruition and enjoying of His presence as far as this life will allow. God's work all of it, and man's work all of it. The thought is man's, the new disposition or trend of life, the acceptance of the Divine. It is amazing, but it is not magic. From the start we have been made capable of a Divine life in God; but the capacity of life is not the life, and we are not spiritual men until the spiritual life has been deliberately, consciously chosen by us. The 'mute inglorious Milton' after all was not a Milton; nor was the rich young ruler who went away sorrowful a disciple, even although Jesus loved him. The Spirit acts on us through the word, through ideas, conceptions

of Divine things, through longings and wearinesses, through glimpses of Christ the Lord; and not until these have been awakened in us, and *we* by faith have made them ours, are we spiritual men.

The Sacraments.

The sacraments have a language, a universal and most impressive language of their own, which speaks in the same moment to all nations of the earth whatever their speech may be. In them alone do the assembled peoples hear, every man in his own tongue wherein he was born, the Gospel of Christ; and in them also does every believer hear Christ speak, satisfying those secret needs of the spirit to which sermons and books rarely penetrate. At the font and at the table, associations rise and gather in the heart, experiences of the past, memories of home, of distant members of the family, and of the departed. Our thoughts run back to communions long past, to broken vows, to struggles against sins. Back they run also through ages to the days when our Lord lived on earth, and to the night when he instituted the Sacred Supper. We hear his own words uttered again; we partake, in some such form as the disciples observed, of the bread and the wine; and there falls on us some portion of the blessing pronounced so long ago, something also of the

peace and strength, of the hope and the assurance of His love. How have these graces come? Through the word. The Lord's Supper, if it has become effective to us, has become so through its speaking to the soul just those truths which have been preached and which we have made our own, through the contact of a Spirit full of a purpose of love with a spirit seeking deliverance and life. The spirit of man has been helped not through some subtle influence of the consecrated elements upon the mind, not through an unknown power of the administrant, but through the dealing of the believing soul with God. It is no more a memorial than prayer is a memorial. It is the communication of grace, the same grace we get in prayer and in reading, and by the same manner of communication—more impressive it may indeed be, more memorable, more abiding, but the same grace. The grace comes by faith in the presence of God made real to us by the word; but the faith that secures the grace is the act of the whole personality going out freely to God. There is no other grace than the free act of God in the heart of man, and no other way of its coming than the free act of man in its joyful acceptance.

The experience of many believers who

enter with their whole soul into participation of the Lord's Supper is of the very richest and most spiritual kind. They bear witness that in it they come more clearly into the presence of God than by any other means. And this is true not only of the cultivated but of the simplest minds. It is of course impossible to compare the experience of one man with the experience of another, but evidently what one says of his communion with God in the Sacrament another says of his communion in prayer, still another of his communion in the time of imprisonment for Christ's sake, and another still when in Christ's service he anticipated every moment a violent death. But let us take the case of prayer as perhaps the commonest and surest of our spiritual acts. Now, what we get in prayer depends, in the first place, on what we expect in prayer. 'What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.' In these words Christ makes a very remarkable statement of the power that is in the hand of an earnest, believing man. There exists a spiritual world in which it is simple fact that to *desire* with the whole heart is to *possess*. We are denizens of that world, and if we can enter into that fellowship with the

Prayer.

Father so that we believe after this manner, we have the powers of that world at our disposal. What is this manner of prayer ?

Spiritual writers sometimes speak of 'a ladder of prayer,' by which they mean that there are stages in the grace of prayer through which a man passes in his growth in the spiritual life.[1] The first stage in prayer with most of us was possibly a cry for escape from some *external* evil, some disease or disaster, either of our own or of one dear to us. There will follow on that a cry for deliverance from sin, or for forgiveness. In this second stage there may be present in the mind a fear of punishment and little more, or a fear of exposure. At any rate the man is in both these cases dealing with God ; he has come into God's presence ; his danger or his sin has brought him there. To God he has not come perhaps for God's sake, but only for his own ; still he has come, and that is much. The next stage is a prayer for virtue or grace. He has seen the worth and beauty of goodness, and desires it. He has seen it in the life of some man or woman, or has read it in story ; or it may be that the sight of it has arisen in his heart as if through inspiration ;

The Ladder of Prayer.

[1] Cf. Professor Theodor Culmen's *Christliche Ethik*, ii. s. 196 ff. Kübel's *Christliche Ethik*, ii. s. 175 ff.

and it holds him as by a power from without. He now prays for it, and prays for it as the chief good of life. He asks it as a thing desirable for *him* to possess. This is not selfishness, and yet there is in it a thought of the self. He may call it a desire for that self-realisation which in a true sense is one of the ends of his existence ; he is seeking that which is best for him, and which it will be best for the world (so far as he can help it) that he should become. But nevertheless there is present in the thought of his attaining the grace he prays for the thought also of a 'culture' into which he is pressing. The next stage lifts the mind away from any thought of self at all ; it is a desire that the will of God be done. To mortal man, however, the will of God continually presents itself as something to be *borne* ; a trial or tribulation, a loss irreparable, a sorrow from which there can now be no escape. At first he prayed that it might not come, but now he prays that he have strength to bear it. And that not in the meaning that the sorrow should not be too painful, but that he do not rebel or murmur against the wisdom and the love of God in sending it. The other thought contained in the prayer that the will of God be done is this : that he take up the will of God

The Will of God be done.

into his own will, and make it his life's work to carry it through. It is not presented to his mind as a commandment coming upon him from without, but as an end, a career, a vast and abiding ambition that God prevail and God's purpose be accomplished. It is a great thing, the greatest thing in the world for him to help in this grand, this age-long, this ever-conquering purpose of God. It is perhaps only a richer strain in this consecration of a man's life that it becomes his chief joy; he delights and revels in the carrying of this ambition out. My strength and refreshment of soul, he says, come from my work in this. 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish His work.' This is the spirit in which the mighty things in the world's history have been achieved. Men in the heroic times did not think of themselves at all, or of their future, or even of their souls' salvation;[1] they thought of the will of God and the necessity that they do it, here and now, and at any cost. For this the Christian prays. He prays that this will be done without any regard for him at all.

[1] It is told of Wilberforce that in the midst of his work for the liberation of the slaves, a lady said to him, 'I trust that in your labours for others you are not neglecting your own soul.' He answered: 'Madam, I had forgot I had a soul.'

If we were to ask him, he would say that he does not believe that it can involve his final destruction, for the God whose will he prays may be done is a God of love who will somehow save his people. But in his prayer he is not thinking of that, but of something vaster, the great universe of men; and he desires that God take His own way whatever it may mean for him, and carry His will through at any cost to him. Now, there is joy, unspeakable joy, to a man in this complete emergence from the thought of himself; and that joy (as we see from the lives of some) will rise up to a note of triumph in the contemplation of the final victory of God over all evil, and the bringing of all His children home at last.

### ABSORBED IN GOD

Absorbed in an Object.

WE are thus led to consider the state of mind in which this is attained. As every one knows, the mind may become absorbed in an object,[1] or as we sometimes say, fascinated, entranced, possessed. We lose sight of our share in the mental transaction; we are not observing our thoughts or our feel-

[1] This is admirably treated in Professor Mitchell's *Structure and Growth of the Mind*, p. 164 ff.

ings about it; we are interested and engrossed in the object and the object alone. It is the merit of science as a discipline that it begets this attitude of mind; and the greatest of our scientific men have been singularly free from any thought but that of finding the truth. The same is manifest in the life of the religious man. We are not now speaking of him as a man interested in *understanding* Divine things, but as one whose mind is set on God. He is not now asking the reasons for Christian action; nor is he considering where the thought of it has come from, or where it will lead him to, or what will happen to him or to the world. It is God he is concerned with, God's truth, God's will—God. For him the truth or will of God is a wind that bloweth where it listeth; he makes no inquiry of its whence or its whither; he lets it carry him whither it wills. With a mind fixed on God, he is *wafted* by the breath of God. But it must be observed that although the mind is fixed on God to the complete exclusion of any consideration of the mind's own action the mind is nevertheless intensely active. We are not 'working' the mind, not consciously applying it to the object; but it is applied to and is working on the object. Just because it is so, and because it is our mind

and not another's, the object is seen by *us* according to the condition in which our mind is, *i.e.* according to the equipment we have given it in the past, its enrichment by our past experiences—in short, according to the law of apperception, the content of our subconscious mind. We empty our souls of all that will impede our intercourse with the Eternal; we are in His presence and are waiting for what He may say; our whole thought is set on this Supreme Object, and we have no interest or desire to hear another speak. God is present as He is present everywhere, and is present wholly; we are in His presence in the most real sense, for our whole heart and mind are set on Him. At such a moment there are but two sources of thought possible for us, that which we now call our subconscious mind, and that which is the object alone. The object awakens our thought, and our mind interprets the object. God speaks. *What* God is it that speaks?[1] The god of a savage will speak to him of those evil spirits he dreads; the God of a Jew will speak of righteousness and the law; the God of the Christian, through the Holy Spirit, speaks only of the revelation He

God speaks.

[1] 'Wie einer ist, so ist sein Gott;
Darum ward Gott so oft zum Spott.'—GOETHE.

has made in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit that speaks to the Christian is the Spirit that takes of the things of Christ, opens up their meaning, bears them in on the soul, and brings forth that fruit of the Spirit, that love, joy, peace that come from Him alone. The Spirit of Christ meets with the spirit of man, and in the communion of Spirit with spirit man's temptations vanish, sins die out, burdens are lightened, weakness is changed into strength, and a peace that passes understanding takes possession of the soul. How vivid and real this may be, how deep and abiding it often is, we all know from the lives of many Christian men and women. Here is what Jonathan Edwards says of it in his *Diary*, written twenty years after the experience:[1] 'The first instance that I remember of that sort of inward sweet delight in God and divine things that I have lived in since was on reading the words, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." As I read the words there came into my soul, and was, as it were, diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense quite different from anything I ever experienced before. Never

Jonathan Edwards.

[1] Memoir by Sereno E. Dwight, *Works*, vol. i. p. lv. ff.

any words of Scripture seemed to me as these words did. . . . I walked abroad alone, in a solitary place in my father's pasture for contemplation. And as I was walking there, and looking upon the sky and clouds, there came into my mind so sweet a sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God, as I know not how to express. I seemed to see them both in a sweet conjunction; majesty and meekness joined together: it was a sweet and gentle and holy majesty; and also a majestic meekness; an awful sweetness; a high and great and holy gentleness. After this my sense of divine things gradually increased, and became more and more lively, and had more of that inward sweetness. The appearance of everything was altered; there seemed to be, as it were, a calm sweet cast or appearance of divine glory in almost everything. God's excellency, His wisdom, His purity, and love, seemed to appear in everything; in the sun, moon, and stars; in the clouds and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water and all nature; which used greatly to fix my mind. I often used to sit and view the moon for a long time; and in the day spent much time in viewing the clouds and sky, to behold the sweet glory of God in these things: in the

meantime singing forth with a low voice my contemplations of the Creator and Redeemer. . . . Holiness, as I then wrote down some of my contemplations on it, appeared to me to be of a sweet, pleasant, charming, serene, calm nature; which brought an inexpressible purity, brightness, peacefulness, and ravishment to the soul. The soul of a true Christian, as I then wrote my meditations, appeared like such a little white flower as we see in the spring of the year; low and humble on the ground, opening its bosom to receive the pleasant beams of the sun's glory. . . . There was no part of the creature-holiness that I had so great a sense of its loveliness as humility, brokenness of heart, and poverty of spirit; and there was nothing I so earnestly longed for. My heart panted after this—to lie low before God, as in the dust; that I might be nothing, and that God might be *all*, that I might become as a little child.'

Many a Christian man among us can follow the truth as well as the beauty of these words, as they touch our souls here and there according to our poorer or richer experience. God has met us also somewhere on our journey, has had His dealings with us, and filled our life with new power and splendour. We have worked with Christ, or it may be have

suffered with Him, or have been alone with Him in dark valleys or on mountain-tops; and now we know that the fullness of life is in the presence of God. But whether it has been through word or sacrament or prayer or mystic rapture or tribulation, these are only *means* of grace. The grace itself is the presence of the Spirit of God in the heart. For this we have been made. We know His call when we hear it, we can answer it, we can consecrate ourselves to His service. We find our chiefest joy in ministering to the lowliest of His people, or it may be in deep study of His word or His works, or again in the reconciling of His ways to men. But all this is accomplished in us and by us through the fellowship of Jesus Christ. It is He who awakens men to the knowledge of their high destiny, who purifies them from base motives in the working of it out, who urges them forward yet controls them, who sometimes forges them (if one might say so) even in fire that He may fit them for His work, or it may be only for failure. What matters it, if His will is accomplished and men give Him the glory?

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